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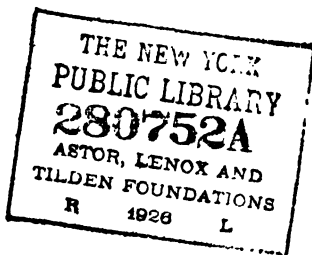
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TO
FRANCES FORBES ROBERTSON

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BOOK I
HECTOR AND REBECCA

CHAPTER I

It seems that Mrs. Cayley's last ball had been given in order to let it be discovered how Roland and Rebecca would conduct themselves when a number of keen eyes were upon them. If Rebecca had been a widow the curiosity would doubtless have been almost as great, but being a wife who had suffered much from a foreign husband in a foreign city, and being also a refugee from matrimony, she became the absorbing topic of the evening. What had irritated her friends had been her resolute silence about the events of her short married months. It displayed too much wisdom and self dependence, and Lady Middlemass, not long a widow and as young as Rebecca, felt specially aggrieved, and called her a dangerous woman. That all the men were still her adorers made things not better but worse. What had happened during the ten months' sojourn at Naples? That was the question dancing on all lips and in all eyes while the feet were dancing on the floor. No one even knew where her husband was, although there was a rumour that he was now in prison. At any rate an Englishwoman who had married a Neapolitan and had lived with him in Naples, which some

considered to be the city described as "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" in the Book of Revelation, and who had suddenly left the city, carrying a cradle with her, ought surely to have stories to tell as good as anything in Boccaccio. But Rebecca had nothing to say to those who crowded round her on her return. Long hours might be spent with her privately in the vain endeavour to make a discovery. She only pointed, like a mother, smilingly to the cradle and its contents, as if she had brought it as a present to her country. And that cradleful, as Lady Middlemass pretended, contained extraordinary secrets. But even when a year and more had passed, and the child had got out of its cradle and was running about, Rebecca continued to harass her friends by absolute silence. Every one felt sure that something unutterable must have occurred during some brief delirium of marriage, else why did she refuse to disclose it? Some recompense for such snubbing, however, was found in the fact that the next part of her career, in which evidently Roland was to figure, would be lived under the very noses of her supervising friends. Naples, the great siren, sitting among its old sea rocks, had lured her away for a time, but now she was back again to tea-drinking and Protestantism. She owed some explanation to her friends. Gossip and scandal, long weary of rumours and always anxious for facts,

became desirous of fixing her place among modern women, and determined once and for all to solve the enigma of her character, to put her, you might say, in a cage apart in some garden of moral varieties.

Thus when she began to go into society again and came among Mrs. Cayley's guests, and Roland followed closely after, there was quite a flutter. As usual she was the most beautiful woman in the room. "But this is the woman," every one seemed to whisper, "whose husband committed a forgery!" As such, she was interesting even apart from her own beauty. But from her appearance, at least, no one would have said that any weight of shame was weighing her down. She seemed perfectly happy as she passed through the room, followed by Roland. Every one knew that Roland had been saying for years, "By Gad, I love her!" Of course Lady Middlemass was there, but at first she had hardly been able to make up her mind to go. She had turned out dress after dress, and had thrown most of them aside in criticism and disgust. She became so cross that her maid told her what a fright she was making of herself. At length, however, the maid persuaded her to wear her yellow brocade, and the vexed woman went. One of the men who was in the secret of her jealousy said she looked like a detective in petticoats. Late in the night Roland, taking

pity, led her through a chill dance, but it was worse than no dance at all. She had watched Rebecca shining for three hours. The pale blue gown decorated with fragile lace contrasted admirably with the gold of her hair. Roland was apparently bewitched. All the men were bewitched. It was monstrous to see a woman, about whose marriage there was such a mystery, being stared at by a whole roomful in admiration. It was intolerable, and Lady Middlemass left. But before she went she had the mortification of seeing most of the men, when Rebecca's carriage was called, making some excuse to their partners and leaving them for a moment to escort the rival down.

Now when a beautiful woman with opportunities of leading an extremely gay life, such as Rebecca had, insists on remaining good, there is always a set of persons about her who wait breathlessly to see whether she will "hold out." Some *coup*, as Lady Middlemass said, which they all considered inevitable in the circumstances, might take them unawares any day. So that when Rebecca began to go as regularly to an obscure church as a pious Catholic woman goes to confession, certain of her friends thought it meant that at last she was having a struggle with herself. Others thought it meant that at last she was becoming a hypocrite. But the fact that Roland, who had seldom entered a church since

he had been carried to his baptism, had been seen more than once in Rebecca's pew, helped to increase the smiles and the excitement of the onlookers. Religion and dancing seemed a peculiar combination, especially when Roland was the co-actor in both. The thing was too unusual not to enliven their curiosity. Every Sunday morning, about quarter to eleven o'clock, Rebecca very elegantly dressed came out of her father's house in Pont Street. At the same hour, Roland, also very elegantly dressed, left his quarters in Sloane Street, and generally overtook Rebecca. Invariably she led her little boy by the hand, and used to walk down Walton Street, cross Marlborough Road, turn into one of the narrow streets which connect Belgravia with Old Brompton, and then make her way to the little dissenting Church of the Redeemer. If Roland happened to be with her she chatted all the way. The boy generally walked between them, holding a hand of each, and it was his special delight to use his mother's and Roland's arms like the ropes of a swing to raise himself, by gripping very tightly, almost to the level of their shoulders. A passer-by might have reasonably doubted whether Rebecca was the boy's mother, not merely because she appeared to be almost too young, but because, while she was every whit an Englishwoman, with the distinction of dress and of manner which might be

expected from Belgravia, the child's general appearance and especially his dark eyes and hair suggested foreign parentage. Yet Rebecca had that indefinable air of a young married woman, which may be always detected though it may be difficult to explain. Perhaps it comes from the rapid development within her of the supreme qualities of a nurse, together with a sense of personal possession of the human charge which is to become hers, or is hers already. At any rate, Rebecca *was* the boy's mother. If the passer-by had then looked at Roland to see whether perhaps he was the boy's father, a glance would have been sufficient to show him that it was not the case, because Roland had nothing foreign about him except his cigar. Rebecca had pure golden hair, and she was not so pale as to make the contrast between the paleness of her face and the gold of her hair too severe. Happily also, her eyes had not that amount of brilliance which, if women only knew it, becomes in the end irritating and disagreeable, but were filled with a certain subdued glow which was doubtless characteristic. She was by far the most distinguished visitant to the humble little church. When she entered a great many heads used to turn to watch her passing down to her pew, behind which was a tolerable window of stained glass. And when the soft rays fell across her into the dark church beyond, beautifying even it,—be-

cause Rebecca had certainly little need of being beautified—she looked like a mysterious Madonna of Botticelli, dumb and expectant as for some new surprise. She generally made the boy sit on her left side except when he became very restless. If he turned to look at the colours of the glass, for instance, or tried to reach up to them, she took him on her lap or asked Roland to take him on his knee. It was noticed that if any very emotional hymn was being sung, such as Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," Rebecca's and Roland's voices used to be heard above the voices of the choir, as if they were singing in dead earnest, and with extraordinary meaning and passion. The boy used to look up at them as if he was pleased with the power of their voices, and almost clapped his hands for joy. Whenever the singing ceased, Rebecca's face used to be wet with the tears which, however, were concealed by her veil, while Roland's face, which was usually without any traces of emotion, became vivid with expression. In those moments they seemed in the very accord and unity of their singing to be attempting to break away from each other. The spectacle amused the cynicism of their friends. Until they discovered that Roland was a co-worshipper with Rebecca, it used to astonish them that she who had played so recently a considerable part in society and in a foreign city, and possessed still all the allures

of a woman of the world, was content to sit more than two hours every Sunday in a little dissenting chapel, where there was no liturgy, hardly any music worth the name, and a loud-voiced clergyman. Lady Middlemass, the Wallers, Mrs. Cayley, and all that set, said it could never last. But when they discovered that Roland had begun to go to church with her the puzzle became harder.

"I went with her one day," said Lady Middlemass at one of Lady Babington's five o'clocks, "but the long sitting in those dissenting places is dreadful. It made me irritable, and I came out a worse woman than I went in! How she can sit patiently there is more than I know. But probably it's for the boy's sake she does it. She doesn't wish him to be a Catholic like her husband, and so chooses dissent for safety."

Everybody in the room, except perhaps Lady Babington, understood the irony of Lady Middlemass.

"Not at all," said Lady Babington, who was one of the few there who really wished Rebecca well; "you've surely forgotten the traditions of the family. They've been dissenters for generations. Mrs. Morpeth used to take Rebecca regularly to chapel. And Rebecca is giving her boy great doses of Presbyterianism as an offset to her husband's paganism. Her husband wasn't a Catholic. He was nothing at all.

Presbyterianism *versus* Paganism. We may live to see."

"Not at all, Lady Babington," said the elder of the two unmarried Wallers, who were the sisters of Lady Middlemass. "There's more in it than that."

"Well, it means that poor Rebecca tried Paganism and it failed," replied Lady Babington. "I remember once she summed up her experience of Naples by saying to me that it was full of sun and sin. We were all astonished at her return. As you know, I went there to her on a visit, and I expected to find her the happiest woman I had ever seen. Every one said she was the most beautiful Englishwoman who had been there since Lady Hamilton. And I suppose that's praise."

"Oh, I was there too," said Lady Middlemass. "We got such a shock."

There was a pause in the conversation, but every one seemed anxious to hear more.

"Do you think Rebecca is a good woman?" continued Lady Middlemass.

"What do you mean by good?" asked Lady Babington.

"I mean, will she stand this strain and come out all right?" said Lady Middlemass.

"Who knows," exclaimed Lady Babington, raising her shoulders like a Frenchwoman, "she is so lovely! But if a woman is really good she

begins to think of many things besides her own pleasures when she has a child. I've seen so many of us taking refuge in our children. It's what Rebecca's doing."

"Where's her husband *now*?" asked Lady Middlemass.

"Who knows?" some of them exclaimed simultaneously.

"How could she continue to love a man who has been dishonest?" asked Mrs. Cayley whose white bonnet was the most daring piece of millinery in the room. "*Of course* she had to come away from him. He stole money did he not? Her father has never forgiven her; besides, these Neapolitans are anarchists in love as well as in politics. Dreadful people. I've always said an English girl should never marry a foreigner."

"Maddaloni was the handsomest man I ever saw," said Lady Babington. "He was like Byron without the lameness. I can't believe he cheated as they say he did. But I admire Rebecca for her silence. She never says a word, and none of us really knows what happened."

"Roland is just as handsome as Maddaloni," said Marion Waller, with a smile which appeared to be added like an explanatory note.

"How many men are dangling about her now?" asked Lady Middlemass, whose manner betrayed personal interest in all her questions.

"But she hardly sees any one," said Lady Babington.

"Oh," they all exclaimed smiling, while Lady Middlemass laughed outright.

"Do you mean to say," whispered Mrs. Cayley to Lady Babington, "that if your husband stole money out of a bank or did anything dreadful like what Maddaloni has done you could go on loving him? The thing's impossible. You would leave him at once."

"We would never marry men who would do such things," replied Lady Babington; "but if it did happen, it would be hard to know how to act."

The gay set, those who used to come to Pont Street when Rebecca's mother was alive, agreed that, given her opportunities, Rebecca was, at least up to the point when Roland began to come about her again, a rather unusual woman. Possessed of beauty, youth, and wealth, what more did a woman require as a means to her amusement? But she remained for almost a year after her return from Naples resolutely indoors, seeing no one. When Roland's visits began to be talked about they were only surprised that something of that sort was happening so late in the day. It was known, of course, that her liberty was considerably curtailed. She had a troublesome and irate old father, whose reproaches were things to be shunned, and who

when the gout was upon him was "such a handful," as Barkston the housekeeper used to say. "He is quite irreconcilable," said Lady Babington. "I try to humour him for Rebecca's sake, but it's no use. I was there the other day when he was being lifted into his carriage to go to the bank, and he was breaking out on her in the street even."

But then, said the gay set, a clever woman might do wonders with even worse material than an enraged and gouty parent, and indeed because of his infirmity, come all the easier through the dangers of domestic espionage. "Some say she is a widow now," said Lady Middlemass. "Are you sure she is? I am sure she isn't." "*She* says she isn't, but never says anything else," was all the reply which was ever to be got. "Then why does she allow Roland to follow her if she is such a good woman as she pretends to be?" was the question which was always forming on the lips of Lady Middlemass, but which, since every one saw it, became superfluous and impossible to ask.

As for Rebecca, who knew what might be passing in her heart of hearts? She looked like a woman whose romance was only half perfect, and as if she was waiting for its recommencement. A malignant tongue in the city said that Roland would finish it for her. It is one of the ironies of civilisation that certain women become

marriageable only after they are married. It is their misfortune that marriage cannot like friendship be an affair of experiment. Rebecca was of that class. But, after all, it is only a very few things connected with our inmost personality which we can begin over and over again until we learn their hard secret. A great many people were watching Rebecca, but who knew what was irrevocable in *her* case? It was because in spite of church going, she began to be as gay as she used to be, or apparently as gay, that they suspected her of practising a cunning beyond their intelligence. They wanted to know whether her gaiety had any risks in it. Perhaps, since Roland accompanied her, the risk was in the church going? asked one, greatly amused. At any rate, to go to balls was nothing. That was not what they meant by gaiety. Balls might be merely the prelude to all sorts of folly. They could not understand her. Some said that the affectation of being happy had been kept up by her so long that now it appeared natural. A certain contentment seemed to brood over her like the delaying sunshine of a June day. After such an experience as she must have had, surely any ordinary woman would have shown physical and moral dilapidations of a serious kind. Nothing of the sort here. Yet, for all they knew, the little Church of the Redeemer had become for her a sort of shrine for lost things.

She was seeking some kind of consolation. She needed it, some said, and she was getting it. The point was, was she getting it from Roland? A woman lives longer in her feelings than a man. So that if she suddenly loses, as Rebecca lost, any great source of emotion, such as love is, and if her very soul has been outraged, where can she turn, supposing there is no new love awaiting her, except to her religion, which promises a series of feelings as vast as those which in its beginnings love likewise helps her to hope for? But there *was* a new love waiting for Rebecca, Roland's love, which was both old and new because he had loved her though she had not loved him long before she went to Italy and the pagan. Would she require both those strong forces to keep her up, or would she drop one and take the other? A painter who had described her as poetry *en bloc* had said that romance would never die out of her eyes. And so there remained in her a hope of finding still more delight in the world, a hope combined with a doubt of ever possessing it, a doubt which drove her once a week to chapel. Of course, her visits there might be explained as the automatic outcome of her upbringing, a mere affair of habit, since her mother had done for her what she was now doing for her own child. Really, if our mothers have ever carried us to those founts it is rare if we do not at least look back to them. But Rebecca had evidently

some motive of her own. It was this peculiar combination of her life in the world with her life out of it, it was her brilliance in society, the brilliance of her dancing, for instance, which was specially taken notice of, the charm of her bearing toward men, the grace and distinction which birth had brought her and misfortune had been unable to take away—it was all this, in company with her absorption in the exercises of a very simple creed, which tormented the curiosity of her friends. What could be thought of a woman who at Mrs. Cayley's last ball danced half the night with Roland, but who was up the next morning praying to God very likely or making soup in a kitchen for the poor? "I hate her dancing!" exclaimed Lady Middlemass.

It was from about that date that Lady Middlemass began to excite Rebecca's friends by suggesting that the part of her life which was screened off from them might afford some peculiar discoveries. She admitted that ladies who do charity in secret—Rebecca used to carry dinners to the poor—may be admirable women; but if they make extraordinary efforts to hide all traces of their movements, as she said Rebecca did, they were worth additional attention. Therefore it was not enough to search the Church of the Redeemer to see what strange sin might be sitting incognito there. Rebecca would have to be followed into obscure and less public places, to the

district round Farrington Road and Hatton Gardens, for instance, where a portion of the Italian colony congregates, and which she was known to visit. Lady Middlemass had sat very patiently, in spite of all she had said, in Rebecca's pew in the little Church of the Redeemer, and had sung psalms and hymns with considerable zeal. But when she raised her eyes to look at the humble audience, and to discover whether any male might be lurking in it, she saw only women in plain cloth mantles and cheap straw bonnets, a few grey-haired men, and ill-bred infants. Rebecca became more unintelligible than ever. It seemed absurd to believe that Roland and she came there for each other's company. If they had chosen, they might surely have spent all the forenoon all by themselves in some snug corner in the vast city. Evidently they were wearing some mask or other. Only one thing seemed clear, that they were too sensitive to stand up together in any well-upholstered building where, once a week, their rivals in fashion met to deplore the vanity of the world. And so they chose this humble little place. But it seemed hard to understand why they were subjected to the necessity of going to church at all, since it is notorious that when a man and woman are in love they worship nobody but each other: thus reasoned Lady Middlemass. Roland was absent the day she sat with Rebecca. He had gone to

the country. Of course, Lady Middlemass had come expecting him, but now she was both glad and angry not to find him. She expected to find him at Pont Street. When Rebecca knelt down after the service, and covered her face with her small gloved hand, Lady Middlemass, turning to look at her, could hardly help muttering, "Hypocrite!" But when they were outside she said what a pleasure it had been, and that she had ordered her coachman not to come back for her, because she actually meant to invite herself to lunch, and knew that Rebecca always walked to Pont Street. Some of the poorer churchgoers lingered on the pavement to watch the two tall stylish women retreating. The boy gave his hand to Lady Middlemass just as he would have given it to Roland.

"He is getting so like his papa," said Lady Middlemass, looking down on the child while he looked shyly up at her.

"Yes, he is, you know," said Rebecca with a smile of acquiescence.

"When is your husband coming home, Rebecca?" Lady Middlemass whispered across the boy's head.

"I hope . . ." faltered Rebecca.

"Ah, you hope, do you, but *is* he coming, dear?"

"Yes," said Rebecca, "may be."

"Will he come suddenly?"

"I don't think he will come like a thief in the night. Is that what you mean?"

"Like a thief—yes. It would be such a start, you know," exclaimed Lady Middlemass as she shook her feather boa, and turned to look at Rebecca.

"Oh, why?" asked Rebecca, apparently astonished, but crimsoning at the word which she had herself inadvertently used.

"For instance, dear, supposing you were in the country, and the window of your room was built low like my verandah, you know, in Onslow Gardens, and you saw your husband suddenly looking in at night when the room was lit, his face against the glass, peering in, and somebody happened to be in the house, or had been invited to come that night whom you wouldn't wish him to see—Oh, I would shriek," said Lady Middlemass, and gave a shrill little cry which attracted the foot-passengers on the other side of the street.

They were at the door. Lady Middlemass went in, expecting to see Roland, while the appropriate speech which she had just made might still be ringing in Rebecca's ears. Old Morpeth was waiting for his daughter. The ghost of Puritanism, which was still unquiet within him, made him feel glad that, although by her marriage she had ruined all his hopes, she went so regularly to church. It was what his family had been doing

for generations. It was what he did himself except when the gout was on him. The Morpeths had become great in the fear of God, so that prosperity and piety were almost as closely associated in their minds as they used to be in the mind of a Hebrew before the Book of Job was written. Yet his physical infirmities made him impatient, and he was irritated because Rebecca could never arrive punctually at lunch on a Sunday. Ten minutes' waiting used to make him grind his teeth, and the butler Briggs knew that whenever Rebecca was at the door it was time to sound the gong. The banker was a huge man with features not unlike Bismarck's. He was now sixty-four, and his face had become rather overloaded with fat, yet there was still extraordinary keenness in the grey eyes. He had given up riding on account of his weight, but his corpulency was somewhat concealed by a frock coat. He used to say that it was the refuge of fat men. Like all bankers, he was very reserved, and the long habit of concealing the operations of his own mind had become fixed. His wife and daughter knew very little of his affairs. They were even unaware that half the smart people who bowed to them in the Park were his debtors, or that some of those who left cards at Pont Street had overdrawn accounts at his bank. He sat silent in his easy-chair at night ruminating on his vast affairs. He had a finger in every pie,

a foot in every slipper, and had floated one successful concern after another. He was absolutely just in all his dealings, although every debtor knew that the last farthing would have to be paid. But once he had been duped by a city speculator who had misused and squandered in hollow undertakings the credit he had given him. Old Morpeth, however, by prompt action saved his bank enormous damage, and wrung the last penny from the ruined man, who then committed suicide, and left his wife and children starving. And it was then that the old banker became haunted by a sense of responsibility. He provided for the widow and children, but his heart-searchings on the event never quite subsided. All his life had been spent in attempting to reconcile his fear of God and his genius for making money. His greatest disappointment, however, had been that he had no son to step into his place in the bank as he had stepped into his father's place. Since a son had failed him, he had thought next of a son-in-law, and all his hopes rested on Rebecca's marriage. But nothing had come of it. Hers, he said, was the maddest marriage, and he never forgave her. His increasing infirmities, and especially the pain of his swollen neck and hands where the gout centred, made him querulous in his old age. He almost wished to be released from his vast affairs, because wealth had become like heaped vanity.

"Where's Roland?" he asked gruffly as Rebecca and Lady Middlemass came in.

"He's in the country," said Rebecca.

"Shooting?"

"Yes, father."

"October in the country is so lovely and cool. All the men say it's the best time," said Lady Middlemass. "But, Rebecca dear, I shall not wait for lunch to-day after all."

Involuntarily Rebecca smiled. Old Morpeth did not press Lady Middlemass to stay; and when she had gone he said to Rebecca, "What is that miserable woman coming here for?"

"I suppose she thought Francis Roland was here," said Rebecca.

"She's more wit than you've ever had then," said the old man as he lifted his glass of port.

"Father," said Rebecca, "that wine will make you worse."

When Lady Middlemass was in the street it seemed that old Morpeth's question, "Where's Roland?" would never leave her mind. She knew, of course, that he had wished Roland to marry his daughter when she was a maid, but it was news that he still seemed bent on that project now that she was—a widow? But *was* she a widow? "Hypocrite! hypocrite!" Lady Middlemass exclaimed savagely as she hailed a cab.

It was Rebecca's skill which hid from Lady Middlemass her deep need. Although she had

an ardent lover, she was perhaps as lonely as that woman who had none. She was as young as Lady Middlemass, but she knew a vast deal more about life. Like many an obscure woman, she found in the humble little church that continuity and abundance of emotion which women desire, and which, when they find, helps them to find also so easily within themselves the rudiments of immortality, and gives them faith when men have none. Love and prayer have at least this in common that they promise infinite things. The question of Lady Middlemass, "Why, then, does she go on dancing with Roland?" would then get as an answer, "It was her concession to her lover." Of course, only the future would tell whether it was dangerous, the future which might bring back her avenging husband. Meantime, also, she knew of no better way in which to bring up her child than to teach him what she had been taught. She hoped, like all good mothers, that she might be able to make some contribution to the imperishable part of her child, and that although his outward beauty was no gift of hers, her name might be written across his book of life.

It seemed an infinite time—infinite because every moment of it had been counted—from the day when she was fleeing with him from Naples and from her husband, and when every lineament of her face, and especially the drooping

curves of her mouth, seemed to say, "I expected something different!" Slow months passed, during which she still expected something different, till the day when little Reynold, by a sudden question, "Who is father?" made the blood leave her face. When it became necessary to tell him that he must no longer call his grandfather "Pa . . . pa," his child's surprise and indignation at the truth showed itself in a burst of angry tears. And even the stern banker saw the pathos of it, although, indeed, he saw and felt it rather on its irritating side. But when the boy climbed up on him as he was sitting in the wide armchair in the library, and threw his little arms round the old man's neck, demanding furiously if it was true, it was perhaps the first time since his wife's death that Richard Morpeth felt within him a slight movement of compassion. For when Rebecca, who was standing near with a smile half of pleasure and half too of melancholy in her eyes, said, "Come, darling," and called him off, the old man kept him still on his knee. The bewildered child then began to ask if Roland was his papa; and when old Morpeth said rather brutally, "No, my little man, but he should have been," Reynold looked from the one to the other as if he suspected they were deceiving him. And Rebecca knew that with every year that passed she would appear to her son in a more and more curious light.

"What is papa doing?" he began to ask.

"He is playing," said Rebecca.

"Oh, will he come and play with me?"

"You are to go back to him when you are a big boy. Would you like to go?" asked Rebecca, unwilling to explain what she meant by play. She could hardly be expected to tell him at that stage all the truth.

"Oh yes," said Reynold, putting his little brown face close to his mother's, and looking into her eyes, "why did we leave papa? Will you come back, too, mamma?"

"I am never to go back, Reynold," replied Rebecca; "so they say."

As she spoke, he kept looking at her with the subtle inquiry of a southern child, and she could not help noticing how rapidly and vividly he was betraying his Neapolitan origin.

"Why, mamma?" he asked, and then not waiting for an answer, "Does papa play with English boys? Is papa rich, like grandpapa?"

"Papa is a count, darling Reynold," she said, "and you are a little count too. Little Count Rinaldo di Maddaloni! But papa spent too much money in trying to make his family great again, and he did it at the expense of ours, as grandpapa says. Grandpapa was very angry that so much was lost, and said papa was naughty. You must never speak to grandpapa

about it, because it will make him so cross. Do you understand, darling?"

He looked at her in a way which showed he had not understood much, and his face broke into a smile. But afterward there was a slight contraction of his dark eyes, as a sign that he was confused. He was evidently thinking it over.

"Reynold! Reynold!" said Rebecca, and hugged him as only a mother can hug her child.

"Why do you say Reynold, mamma?" he then went on in his perpetual questioning. "You once said my name was Rinaldo."

"Reynold is the English for it," replied Rebecca, letting him step from her lap; "and when you were christened Rinaldo, I whispered to myself, 'Reynold Rinaldo,' giving you the double name, and have called you oftener 'Reynold' just to keep a little tiny bit of English in you to remind you when you go away of England and of me."

She had hardly succeeded in making him very English. Old Joshua Jerdan, her father's lawyer, whom she feared almost as much as she feared her father, always referred to Reynold jestingly as "the little foreigner," and said he was not even a half-breed, but a quarter-breed—three-quarter Italian and one-quarter English. Reynold also got the nickname "Little Pagan" from the Jerdans.

CHAPTER II

IF the reader has any interest in Rebecca, he will wish to know all about the mistaken marriage, but it will take us some time—in fact, it will take us a long time to get to where we were in the last chapter—because there are very many things to say. Rebecca had not really been in such a hurry about it as every one supposed. That she who came of an old stock of English Puritans had been allowed to marry an Italian caused, however, some surprise in England, where, as old Jerdan observed, it is still unknown that British mothers combine, with extraordinary skill, piety and worldly wisdom. But, as Jerdan further remarked, the incongruity of the marriage was no more surprising than this other fact—that the Morpeths had been known for generations to be the most religious and at the same time the most astute men of business who had ever carried on private banking in London. He used to poke fun at old Morpeth on this point. The text about the difficulty a rich man will experience in entering the kingdom of heaven had been satisfactorily explained to successive representatives of the family as they sat in the family pew; so that

when, by chance, the familiar words were read from the pulpit, no Morpeth ever felt uneasy if an unfriendly and calumnious eye used to turn in triumph to where they sat. How they had been able to retain distinction by attending chapel instead of church was, of course, their own secret. But bishops, and even archbishops, were among the callers at Pont Street, and many distinguished heads used to uncover when Rebecca drove in the Park. Their name was known in every great city in Europe where their agents were busy, and a Morpeth might enter the best foreign society as easily as any duke. The knowledge that once a head of the great bank had refused a title which some statesman, needy of electoral support, had been eager to bestow, lent a peculiar dignity to their name. The title had not been offered again, but the present representative of the firm had attained the rank of privy councillor in recognition of the service he had rendered during a great financial crisis in the city by offering a large quantity of bullion in exchange for credit. Thus when Rebecca entered the salon of the old Duca d'Avena at Naples, every one seemed to know her. She caused a flutter only by her beauty. Her auburn hair would have marked her out for distinction among any gathering of dark women, and her mother was pleased when, as they entered, a silence fell upon the guests. It was in that

salon and in the midst of that silence that Hector¹ di Rosa, who called himself the last of the Maddaloni, first saw Rebecca. Their eyes met; and as he pushed his way deftly and gently toward the Duke to crave an introduction, he wondered if every English girl had such a lovely mouth.

"Our Italian women have lips as thick as their fingers!" he said to Rebecca almost ten minutes after he had been introduced; for a Neapolitan hides nothing except his money and his hate till the convenient moment. He never hides his love, and he thinks every moment is convenient for *it*.

"He is called the last of the Maddaloni," whispered the Duchess to Mrs. Morpeth, "very brilliant. He is of a younger and far-out branch, it is true, and some say he shouldn't bear the name, but he is very ambitious, and may become minister, and the dukedom, which is extinct, may be revived and conferred upon him. He is only Count at present."

"He is good-looking," said Mrs. Morpeth, who observed that the eyes of every one were still on her daughter.

One Italian princess—in Italy princesses are as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa—was saying to her neighbour, "She has a good head," and got as a reply, "Yes, but she is rather round in the

¹ *Ettore* in Italian.

back." Another said, "These English are always lean," and yet another, "She looks so gay (*così allegra!*)."

Meantime the Maddaloni was paying more compliments to Rebecca, until she had to ask him if he thought women wore compliments like jewellery. Yes, he was good-looking. He was tall for a Neapolitan, he was bearded as some young Neapolitans are, but he was not so young as he seemed. He was older than Rebecca. He was dark, of course, and lithe, and he had the haughty Oriental stride which it is a mistake to suppose that Neapolitans affect. They inherit it. He had the eyes, which are typical of the Calabrians, eyes which know the causes of even the most subtle facial gesture, and which once seen are never forgotten; but his had in them the added light of ambitions and hopes. Rebecca was fresh from an English school. She did not speak Italian, but she spoke French with considerable fluency, because from her earliest childhood she had had a French governess. She felt slightly embarrassed at first. Had the Maddaloni been an Englishman she would have guessed before hand almost everything he was going to say. An average Englishman would have appeared stronger and would have been better built, not so slim about the legs, and broader in the shoulders, and his eyes would have been easier to read than Hector's. But he might not have had Hector's grace. His haugh-

tininess would very likely have been matter for comedy, whereas Hector's, like the natural haughtiness often discoverable even in the lowest Neapolitans, was a fascination in itself. Rebecca asked him to sit beside her.

"Do you like our city?" he asked.

"I think it is amazing," she said.

"I am glad. I adore it."

"Neapolitans never leave it?"

"No," he said; "it is an event when we go to Rome. We think Florence frightfully Northern."

"Ah, then, what must I be?" asked Rebecca, laughing.

"You are clever, like all Northerners," he said, vexed at his blunder, "but you have the colour of our sun in your hair!"

In England she would have resented so sudden a familiarity, but she had been prepared for the outspoken comment of a Neapolitan, and she smiled. She told him that she had heard of the great family of the Maddaloni and of their palace in Naples, and she asked him to tell her more. He told her that he too had a right to be called a Maddaloni, but that his father, who was now dead, had belonged to a small branch of the stock. Yet the Counts of Rosa bore the Maddaloni arms, and ought, he contended, to inherit the name. The Dukes of Maddaloni were a younger branch of the Carafa. Those authors were cor-

rect who said that the Carafa were descended from Sigismondo, the old Pisan who became King of Sardinia. Sigismondo was a great seaman like Nelson, said Hector, and became admiral of the fleet of the republic when he was driven from his own kingdom. But the history of the family had been marked by a perpetual transference of their allegiance from kings to republics, and from republics back to kings as Naples became the prey of successive governments. He excused their fickleness by the stress of the times they had to live through. Rebecca noticed his enthusiasm when he began to talk of the days when the city was more than a city, and when she was nothing less than a sea power. His simplicity captivated her. He told her with an amusing pride that the Maddaloni became knights of Malta in 1395, and that their names might be seen on old monuments all over Calabria and Sicily. "That's it!" he said, "they've left only tombs."

"No," replied Rebecca, "they have left *you* behind them." He bowed.

"If a former Maddaloni were able to offer you advice as to how you should act now," said Rebecca, "what would it be?"

"To throw in my lot with the government, I suppose, that's what he would say. I follow Crispi. D'ye know that he's in the room here? I shall show you him when I have a chance. He

dreams of an imperial Italy. But Naples and Italy will never be really united. We are not Italians really."

"I have heard," said Rebecca, "that you are fiercer and wilder than the others. Is that true?"

"Yes," he replied, "think of our sufferings. Italy has been the prey of Europe, but we have been the prey of Europe, Africa, and the East. Every one has been here. Ah, if there could be a man now like my great ancestor Hector, Duke of Andria. It was he who helped to drive out some of those wretched Bourbons whom your Gladstone hated so much. He founded the Jacobite club at Naples, and printed the *Constitution of Robespierre*. Your English minister Acton imprisoned him," he added indignantly.

"It was wicked of him," said Rebecca, smiling at his almost boyish ardour.

"But he slipped down from the prison by help of a rope which a French girl lent him. Bravo! Girls have often done things like that. When Duhesme came to drive our Ferdinand IV. he got help from Hector, who laid siege to his own territory of Andria, which was in Royalist hands. He was the first on the walls, and planted the old banner of Naples on it, banner which no Bourbon ever wove! When Andria was driven back he gave orders that his own town was to be set on fire, rather than let it

contain the vermin of kings. He smiled at the flames. But at length he was captured as he made escape to the hills. When he was in chains before the judge, who vilely abused him, he called out "Coward judge, it is my chains that make you brave." And when he was beheaded he asked to be allowed to lie on his back to see the descending axe!"

"I think," said Rebecca, "you wish your name to be added to the list of these brave men."

"What times are these!" said Hector in scorn. "We are so poor. It is an age of petty lawyers, who fill the parliament. The very earth is in penury. The land round old Vesuvius, which used to be so fruitful, hardly keeps the town in vegetables now."

The salon of the Duca d'Avena was buzzing like a gay hive, and was noisy with the well-bred hubbub.

"Do you see that old man perfectly bald and with a heavy white moustache?"

"The man with the raging eyes?" said Rebecca.

"Yes, that's Crispi. Doesn't he look like an old angry lion? You know there's a fearful scandal on foot, and this is the first time he has appeared since he resigned office. He has been accused of bigamy. He married a washer-woman in Sicily long ago, and now she is mak-

ing a claim. How a man's ambitions are ruined ! His party is splitting up."

"Do you wish to go to him ?" asked Rebecca rather icily.

"No, no," said Hector, "let's go to the balcony."

They came on the great terrace which overlooks the bay. The Avena palace, unlike the palace of the Maddaloni, which is in the very heart of the city, was built on the place known as the Falcon's beak, because it juts out to the sea like the bill of a bird. It was here that Lucullus had his gardens and the Roman Emperors their summer villas. The view is the most magnificent in the world. As Hector and Rebecca came out the sun was setting toward Ischia, although the island was not seen. It was the month of June. The sea was perfectly still except for the last undulations which the afternoon breeze had left. Fishing-boats were going toward Capri and the Cape of Sorrento. Far off, beyond the south wind, Sicily and the dusts of Africa. It was the old siren sea that had been furrowed by Greek prows, and that had foamed around the fleets of the old, old world. It was wonderful to think that the same sight had been seen by Æolians, Siculans, Saracens, Greeks and Goths as they had successively swept over Naples. Toward the left lay Herculaneum and Pompeii, sunk cities of the plain, and toward the right Baia and the sites of

old Cumæ. Behind were the towers and walls of the feverish modern town, alive with the pestilence of its lusts, on its way, doubtless it too, like old Gomorrah, to its doom. Above was the stout castle of Saint Elmo, wreathed by vineyards. And the sea below gleamed like a vast purple wine-vat, soft, foaming and trodden by the sun. Rebecca had read a sonnet of Wordsworth in which he calls Naples "soft Parthenope," and she now felt the marvellous truth of the description. She was almost overpowered by the unfamiliar glory of the scene. Dark London seemed like an inexplicable nightmare. But here was beauty and here were the springs of mystery.

"It is amazing," she said.

"Oh I will take you," he replied, "if I may be allowed, far out toward the Isles of the Sirens, which we cannot see from here, but where the sea is as purple as wine. There the two gulfs join. I have a sailing-boat. Will you come? You are English. You must love the sea."

"Yes," said Rebecca; "if mamma will allow me."

The sun was casting down the vast burden of the day's gold, and the sea was throwing back his azure to the sun. Here surely by the midland sea was the shrine of all beauty. Sea and land seemed like a vast open temple of the sun. It was one of those moments for Rebecca which visit us too seldom, when there pass over us

feelings vague like a wind and when, because of our own happiness, we are helped to the illusion that mankind must be like a vast happy audience in the dædal world.

"This," said Hector, "is the place I love. Not the rest of Italy, only this. I am glad you have come so late, when the city is empty of tourists. Do you see those cliffs away to the left. That is Sorrento, where I have a villa which I have let. If your mother will allow me the honour I shall take her and you to the great sea bath of Queen Joanna, which is quite near."

"Yes," said Rebecca; "please don't believe them when they say that we English have no romance in us."

"I am glad you love our city," said Hector; "would you like to live in it?"

"Yes," she replied. "But tell me more about the Maddaloni."

"Oh," he said, "I would just bore you. I would have to begin at the eleventh century. We had a Pope, you know, in our family, Paul IV., and I don't know how many cardinals. Paul IV. was once ambassador to England. A great many generals make up the list."

"Would you like to be a cardinal?" asked Rebecca, which was a delicate way of discovering his religion.

"No," he said. "The Church is now living *on* the people, not for them. It was you Protestants

who re-discovered conscience. But tell me now, about your family."

"Oh," said Rebecca, "stocks and shares and bank book! We have no great deeds. Our swords were beaten into pen-nibs long ago!"

"How is the great banker?" he asked. "Do you know that your father's agent is in the room? Shall we go in?"

They came in from the balcony, and were met by the hum of gay voices. Rebecca could not see her mother in the crowd. Many of the women had roses and carnations in their bonnets, and most of the dresses were as white as lilies. Usually Italians dress sombrely in black, unlike the dwellers in Campanella's city of the sun, where they wore white in the morning and crimson at night. But in summer even Neapolitans put on colour. Rebecca saw a little stout man detaching himself from a group, and advancing toward her. Everything about him was diminutive, small hands, small feet, but his nose was large and hooked, and his brow, which was covered with wrinkles, was also large, and hung over a pair of small, penetrating eyes. A full grey moustache covered his lips.

"Ah! this is Vacca," said Hector; "I suppose you know him."

"No. Who is he?" asked Rebecca. "Is he papa's agent?"

Hector answered by presenting him.

"Vacca," he said, "it is strange that I have got to know this lady even before you, who are her father's trusted agent."

"Yes, yes," said Vacca, who spoke English. "This lordling is always pushing himself forward. He will be at the head of us all some day, no doubt."

"He is ambitious then," said Rebecca, looking at Hector, "as a man should be."

"There, Vacca!" said Hector, beaming with delight, "The lady says I am ambitious, as a man ought to be."

"Signorina," said Vacca, "I left my card yesterday, but you were out. How is the banker?"

"My father is well," said Rebecca.

"You could not persuade him to come with you, I suppose? His great affairs, I know him," said Vacca, and then turning to Hector he said in Italian, "He will die counting money, ha, ha."

"The English say time is money do they not?" asked Hector.

"'Tis better than saying love is money," replied Vacca, with a keen glance at the Maddaloni. "Lady, I am a Neapolitan, but I shall confess one weakness, we are interested only in two things—beauty and money. It makes our enemies afraid of us!" His eyes twinkled as he looked from the one to the other, and then he added "Maddaloni, boy, you will come to a bad end."

"He is a reactionary," said Hector to Rebecca; "a Bourbon at this time of day!"

"Reactionary!" exclaimed Vacca; "did not I subscribe money for the new water-works. Certainly if we drink water at all, ha, ha, it must be pure. But you cannot change the face of old Naples so quickly, lady, as young things like this suppose. He wishes to dig up Calabria for its minerals and make Naples the discharging port. Ha, cover our dear sky with soot, blacken our sea! Never! 'tis better we should go on living on the rich foreigners who visit us."

They talked thus for some time, and then Rebecca noticed in the well-dressed crowd a lean face with strange eyes, which were fixed upon her. On the upper lip was a dark, downy moustache, a sign that the owner of it was still young. Yet the face was not young, but had a look of long and persistent search. It was concentrated and ghastly pale, and was full of wits and guile. This youth, Tizio, was even slightly younger than Rebecca herself, but Vacca, whose clerk he was, had made him pass at a bound from boyhood into the knavery and craft of a man of the Neapolitan world. Vacca, who was not merely agent of the Morpeth bank, but middleman in a hundred transactions every day, whose emissaries were for ever flitting through the city, had found that this youth possessed the genius of the extortioner. It was worth while securing

a henchman with a sure head. Thus Tizio had been for a considerable time familiar with the affairs of the Morpeth bank, and was almost as proud as Vacca that he had a share, however humble, in its fortunes. He had often handled Rebecca's father's cheques. He had even been sent to London on one important mission, and had been to Pont Street, although Rebecca had not seen him. When he came back he described to Vacca the wealth which had come under his eyes, and how that the banker's house was groaning with the weight of its treasures. He assured Vacca that Neapolitan elegance was pitiable. When he saw Maddaloni and Rebecca going out to the balcony he whispered to him, "How could her hair be anything else than gold! It's gone through their blood!" Ever since he had been in London he had secretly wished to be transferred to the English bank. In Naples there was no scope for a man's ambitions. He did his work for Vacca extremely well, but felt the limits of it. He sought a larger outlook. Meantime if the government ever announced a sale of horses, drawn off from any cavalry corps as no longer useful in the field, and it became necessary for some purpose or other to keep down the auction prices, Tizio was sent in order by his mere presence to intimidate the bidders, and keep them from bidding. If a dealer was asking too high a price for any object, a house,

a boat, a piece of furniture or a carriage, the prospective buyer complained to Vacca, and Tizio was sure to be despatched to reduce the price. If a great cargo arrived at the port it was quite likely that Tizio might be seen watching the unloading of the ship, and whispering now and again certain things to the custom-house officials, who forthwith passed large quantities of taxable goods without registering duty. He was known by all the dealers, not because of his own importance but on account of the omnipotent Vacca who was behind him. Those who suffered and likewise those who lived by blackmail, those whose interest was that a certain marriage should take place and those whose interest lay in frustrating it, those who advocated and those who denounced any municipal undertaking which involved the expenditure of money and the employment of labour, in fact, those who pushed and those who were pushed against came for advice to the irresistible Vacca. It was a great day for the shrewd little usurer when he was made agent of the Morpeth Bank at Naples. From that date the ramifications of his business which connected the upper and lower strata of Neapolitan life, reaching very high and very low, were watched over by his shifty young clerk. Left-hand jobberies were consigned to Tizio. Since needy people were to be found at both ends of the social ladder it was not neces-

sary to pursue two different sorts of policy. "Squeeze them, squeeze them," said Vacca. "That's all." But as he gradually rose from the obscure position of a changer of copper coins at a street table, over which the woman who was now his wife used to make love to him, to the assured respect of a solid banker and representative of an important English house, he became less and less visible to his poorer clients. Although the prime mover in many a curious transaction his name might never be mentioned or even known. Like an English or Scotch pork butcher who early feels himself destined to become wealthy and a baronet, and so takes the precaution of carrying on business anonymously, lest his name might become known and soiled, Vacca at the most prosperous point of his career was deriving an income from obscure sources which no one ever investigated. He sat outside watching the little war of human interests. He was like Cardinal Richelieu in Victor Hugo's *Marion de Lorme* who never appears in the play, but whose hand is felt in every act. No, the Shylock of Naples was wise enough to leave a great many things in Tizio's hands. He never told Tizio—perhaps because Tizio knew already that business had increased tenfold since his accession.

"Do you know, Vacca," Tizio once said, and he was the only subordinate who ever presumed

to address the little man so familiarly, "I've discovered the way to look innocent. Relax the muscles of the face as much as possible until your expression borders on idiocy."

"Ha, ha," laughed Vacca. "I wish you were my son."

Certainly had it not been for the filial interest which Tizio took in Vacca's affairs, Vacca's Villa which was next the Avena palace might have been less luxurious. Tizio used to read the cypher telegrams which came to his master from every Bourse in Europe. One secret he had learned from him, which was, that it is not sufficient to be a keen buyer. It is necessary to *compel* a reluctant man to sell to you the object you desire.

"Ah," said Vacca; "money. That is the base of all society, no matter how disguised."

He was aware it is only a symbol, but the world takes it for a reality, and it becomes from a banker's point of view extraordinarily real.

"It is their poverty," said Vacca, "which makes Crispi and Maddaloni such weak creatures! Maddaloni might come to something if he weren't poor."

Tizio invariably dressed in plain black clothes with a black tie and a high collar. Unlike many young Neapolitans, he did not affect English tailoring, neither did he dress in the vulgar cut which an Italian tailor, if left to himself, and without English models, is sure to produce.

Tizio came home saying that to see well-dressed men, it is necessary to go to England. But he was too careful of his money to spend two hundred francs on an English suit. The only time he ever wore one was when he succeeded in importing cloth free of custom duty. He gave his own instructions to his tailor, and generally appeared dressed like a gentleman. He never wore the light satin ties, low-heeled boots, and wide trousers which are often allowed to pass muster in foreign society. Nor were his fingers covered with rings such as are to be seen on the hands of the more effeminate of his fellow-countrymen. He was severe and plain, and his lithe form gave him sometimes almost an elegant appearance. It was certainly not his dress which was offensive to Rebecca. But women suffer sometimes like children from the sudden fear which certain faces inspire in them. Rebecca took fright at Tizio's remarkable face. She saw he was young, but she felt that he was not innocent. He had been watching her closely while she was speaking to Hector and Vacca. Now and again his body seemed to give an involuntary movement like a spring in her direction, but he caught himself back. She knew he was wishing to come. At length, after saying something to his companion, he came forward.

"This is Tizio, my electioneering agent," said Hector, turning round to introduce him.

"Oh, are you in Parliament?" asked Rebecca, addressing Maddaloni, and allowing her eyes to pass across Tizio's vivid face.

"Yes," said Hector; "I'm M.P. for my own little village of Maddaloni and the surrounding district. I would like to take you and Mrs. Morpeth there. May I?"

"We shall see," said Rebecca.

"He will be Prime Minister yet," said Tizio.

"I dare say," replied Rebecca, conceding a smile, but letting the conversation drop.

"Yes," broke in Vacca, "the coming man. I've been saying so to Crispi. Poor old fellow! How the sins of a man's youth dog him in his age!"

"May I ask," said Tizio to Rebecca, "how is the banker?"

"He is well," said Rebecca. "He seems to have more friends than he knows of."

"That is better," replied Tizio, "than to have more enemies than you know of!"

"This is my partner," said Vacca, introducing him again.

"Oh," exclaimed Rebecca. "I did not know."

"Only," said Tizio, "the very humble servant of the great banker."

The room was now very warm although the sun had almost set. The perfume of magnolias and roses was almost overpowering. But the reception was about over, and some of the guests had already left. Rebecca bowed to Vacca and

to Tizio, and found her mother on the staircase, which was crushed with descending guests. Maddaloni was at her side.

"They do those things so well," said Mrs. Morpeth. "Wasn't it pleasant?"

"Mamma," said Rebecca, presenting Hector, "I wish to introduce the Count Maddaloni."

Hector bowed and offered to escort them to his carriage. His offer to be their guide, though unusual after so short an introduction, was accepted. Mrs. Morpeth had heard about him from more than one in the room, and every one had praised him. Tizio, who had come out from the salon, heard him ask if he might be permitted to drive them in his own carriage to the Castle of Maddaloni next day.

"We shall be very pleased," said Mrs. Morpeth, and they passed down.

"His carriage!" whispered Tizio after he had rejoined Vacca.

"Has she caught fire?" whispered Vacca.

"We shall know to-morrow, doubtless. The fellow is really looking handsome to-day. What a windfall it will be for the last and least of the Maddaloni!"

"If it will help him to pay his bond," said Vacca, "let be. I shall welcome such a lady to Naples, daughter of old Money Bags of London. Such a bank! It could buy all our rotten city, and rebuild it."

In a letter to her husband, Mrs. Morpeth mentioned that they had met his agent, "a fussy, delightful little man," and that they had also met the last of the Maddaloni, who was going to be very kind to them. And it was while Rebecca was writing the same things to her father that Hector drove up punctually as he had promised. His men were correctly dressed in the Maddaloni livery, red vest, white breeches, white stockings and white coat, silver buckles on the shoes and silver lace on the hat. The Maddaloni arms were painted on the carriage with the motto of the family, *Hoc fac et vives* written beneath. The arms consist of two shields with three bands of silver on a red ground, and on one of the shields there is a thorn branch placed slant-wise. The arms were originally the same as the old regal arms of Hungary, and it is reported by historians and heraldic writers that while two knights of the family were engaged in a great joust before Charles Martel, the king expressed surprise that two private gentlemen should bear arms similar to his own. Whereupon both of them plucked a branch of thorn from a hedge, and placed it across their shields. Strictly Hector should have worn only the shield without the thorn, since he said he belonged not to the Spina but to the Stadera branch of the family. But because they were interconnected, and because he was ambitious and was proud of the

name he bore, he carried the double arms. At the sound of a stopping carriage Rebecca went to the balcony, but it was as if an arrow went through her heart when she saw Tizio sitting beside Hector. He had a great bouquet in his hand. She wondered if he was to accompany them, and if there would be room for all.

"Who is that with him?" asked Mrs. Morpeth, who had also come on the balcony.

"Vacca's partner it seems," said Rebecca; "I was introduced to him yesterday, but didn't catch his name. I don't like him."

Hector alighted while Tizio remained in the carriage. Rebecca met her lover on the stair, and instantly asked him if his friend was going to accompany them.

"Why?" asked Hector.

"Because I don't like him, and won't go if he goes."

"Oh, well," said Hector apologetically, "of course he is, as it were, in your father's service, being with Vacca."

"It's not that," said Rebecca, "only . . ."

"I hadn't thought of it," broke in Hector. "Here in Italy we sometimes break down distinctions which I know that you in England are careful to preserve. What makes you so bold?"

"Bold?" repeated Rebecca astonished. "It's a mere question of likes and dislikes is it not? Who is he?"

Hector looked round to see whether any one might be overhearing him. There was no one. Mrs. Morpeth had gone to fetch her parasol and summer shawl.

"He's of the Camorra," he whispered; "he's a camorrista!"

"What's that?" said Rebecca.

"It's a man with honey in his mouth and gall in his heart," replied Hector; "you must have heard of the Camorra of Naples, the vast secret society which people suppose has been destroyed. Never! Would to God!"

"Why then have you anything to do with him?" asked Rebecca.

Hector shrugged his shoulders.

"The Camorra," he said, "came here with the Spaniards. It is the vampire of Naples, a terror not seen but felt. Ah! but it's got its good sides too . . . and perhaps I've been indiscreet. . . . Tizio is a good fellow, not so dangerous as the rest." Here he sighed, and a look half of fear and half of rage passed across his face.

"But how," said Rebecca hurriedly, "can you ask us to go in such company? It's impossible. . . ."

"O, please come," he implored. "It's nothing, I assure you. I've been indiscreet. Some of the best people in Naples are in the Camorra which reaches from the lowest ranks to the highest. They are blackmailers, you know, who can do

nobody any harm who leads a right life. I am secretly fighting against them. Do come, do come. It's nothing. You've blackmailers in London, have you not?"

"O yes, heaps of them," said Rebecca.

"Wait," said Hector, "I'll run down and tell Tizio that he mustn't come."

"Do," said Rebecca, while he went wondering what could make her so bold.

But he hesitated when he got out of her sight, and for some minutes she did not see him come to the carriage where Tizio was still sitting with his bouquet. Eventually, however, he came out, and told Tizio hesitatingly that the English girl was shy of him, that the day was very hot, and the load would be too much for the horses.

"That, in fact, I am not to come, Maddaloni," said Tizio with a sneer, as Hector dropped a twenty-franc piece into his hand. "Ah, I see you're in love with the banker's daughter. Vacca will be able to tell me how rich she is. I should almost know myself should I not, being in their affairs?"

"It'll be all right, Tizio," said Hector. "I suppose Vacca told you to join me on the road."

"Yes, Maddaloni. Where are you going? To Caserta, you said, and your great wreck of a castle. Does the fair lady know that if you wish it rebought and rebuilt Vacca will have to do it for you? Does the dear lady know that it is

Vacca's loan which keeps up those nice fat horses, that it was Vacca who bought your seat in Parliament, that it was Vacca who bought back half the nice old palace of the Maddaloni for you, where doubtless you will be giving us a ball in honour of the fair lady?"

"Yes, Tizio, you shall be invited."

"Of course, Maddaloni! It will be to eat the credit we have given you, and to dance on floors that are practically our own. I see what it is, you are going to mortgage the last piece of property you have, this body of yours, mortgage it for her money—eh? She hates me, does she? Is the old lady going to-day?"

"Yes."

"Ah! I shall have no anxieties, then, as yet."

"By our lady!" exclaimed Maddaloni as he ran up again to Mrs. Morpeth and Rebecca.

His face was flushed with excitement, as he told them that Tizio was only waiting to say good-morning. They came down, and Tizio stepped out of the carriage, keeping his hat in his hand, till Mrs. Morpeth told him to put it on again. They all got in, and to Rebecca's surprise Tizio stepped in as well, and sat down opposite her. The coachman was bidden to drive off.

"Are you coming all the way, Tiz?" asked Maddaloni.

"No, no, I came only from Vacca to pay my

respects to the ladies, and to present these flowers," said Tizio, presenting the bouquet to Rebecca. They were from Madame Vacca. Rebecca expressed her thanks, while Mrs. Morpeth said to Tizio that she would soon have to present a cheque at the bank.

"At your service," said Tizio, and added smiling, "we try to keep cheques as long in life as we try to keep flowers, do we not? They sometimes *pass* as quickly!"

"They do," said Mrs. Morpeth, amused.

"I am to ask," said Tizio, "whether the two ladies will honour Signor Vacca by accepting an invitation to dinner to-night."

"We shall be delighted," said Mrs. Morpeth.

Hector felt a pang at the heart. He had not been invited, but presently he was relieved when Tizio turned round in his seat and told him that the invitation was meant also for him.

It was past nine o'clock, and was already very warm. The Toledo and Chiaia, two principal thoroughfares of the city, were beginning to be busy. The goats, fresh from the morning milking, were being driven up to the heights and woods above the town. The sun was streaming on the piazzas, and Naples was prepared for a day of intense heat. Many passers-by with little halfpenny fans in their hands stopped on the pavements to look at the Maddaloni and his English guests. It was whispered that yester-

day he had made a great impression. Vacca, on the way to his office, was at the corner of Chiaia and Via Toledo when he saw the carriage coming down. Every one in Naples knew Maddaloni. Vacca, with a contemptuous smile on his lips, stood to salute the carriage, and described a semicircle with his hat as he took it off. "Ha, ha!" he laughed as the carriage swept round the turning toward the eastern side of the city. Tizio was leaning back apparently watching the shopkeepers opening their shops. His face as usual was utterly pale, and his features which were Greek gave him the appearance of a Sicilian rather than a Neapolitan. He was not looking at Rebecca, but was using his eyes in a way which is familiar to all those who observe Neapolitans closely. They seem to be looking past you in a straight line, but really see all the changes of expression in your face. And yet the eye is not turned aside at all. It is apparently fixed on an object not in line with yourself. The extreme subtlety of the pose is missed by a newcomer, and Rebecca was unaware that Tizio was watching every movement she made. At length he made signs that he was about to leave them, and at Piazza Municipio told the coachman to stop. He lifted his hat, and then disappeared up Via Municipio. Maddaloni seemed to breathe more freely, and the horses began to go at a more rapid pace. The carriage was now outside the

Capuan gate, and on the broad, dusty road which leads to Caserta and the village of Maddaloni.

Meantime Tizio had found Vacca at the office.

"What do you think of the Maddaloni's move?" he asked.

"He throws the net well," answered Vacca, sinking down at his desk. "Give me a fan."

The office was already hot; and he began to fan himself. The street door had been removed, and was replaced by long swinging lines of cane joined by little hinges, piece to piece, but the current of air which passed through was only the hot wind out of the street.

"I am too hot," said Vacca. "I begin to feel the heat too much. 'Tis a sign of apoplexy and age. These flies, too! Send for an ice."

Tizio ordered the boy to go for an ice, and began to cut the envelopes of the morning letters which he then passed unread to Vacca.

"He throws the net well," repeated Vacca.

"Why should we help him any more?"

"Don't you see, boy; it will be the best thing for us if he were to marry that girl?"

"Why for *us*?"

"Because although his villa at Sorrento and his interest in the palace of Maddaloni, which I have secured for my moneys lent him, would keep things safe even supposing there was a crash, it would be better all round, surely, if he were to become the Englishman's heir."

"He would migrate to England, of course," interrupted Tizio.

"Yes; but before he went what a reckoning!" exclaimed Vacca with his eyes twinkling. "Let him be bolstered up by those English, Tiz, a substantial people. That's the word they use when they inquire into a man's affairs. They wish to know if he is substantial, ha, ha! And they are as substantial as the rock their island is built on."

"By the Madonna," exclaimed Tizio, "the fellow will be by far too lucky. I've served him too often."

"Nay, if he were in our grips. And, believe me, the girl, once she is here, will go the way all these English go when they come. I've watched them. A most substantial people at home; but, my God, when they travel they outrival us in our indigenous vices. Then they go home to sad England and sprinkle themselves all over with their conscience, as they call it, which they use like a sort of spiritual disinfectant."

"By the Madonna," said Tizio, "she is lovely!"

"Ah, Tizio," said Vacca, supping his ice. "These English! Think that the old fox, our beloved papa Leo XIII., is so wise that he invests more than half his money in their infidel stocks and fat unbelieving banks! Does he invest it in that rotten Catholic Spain or Catholic Italy. No, but in fat Protestant England!"

Tizio smiled at the old usurer who worked himself into a great passion in spite of the heat, but Tizio was thinking of Rebecca and the lucky Maddaloni.

"It's too much!" he exclaimed, as if he couldn't get to work without thinking of it. "Such a windfall."

"Wait, wait, Tiz, I shall be able to tell banker Morpeth how substantial is Hector di Rosa 'di Maddaloni.'"

"By the cross," said Tizio, "why should we build him up so high?"

"We shall build him very high, Tiz, and then we shall watch him till he becomes perfectly giddy, and then we shall bring him down very low. To work, boy!"

Tizio went reluctantly to his desk. The Maddaloni was enjoying the company of the English girl and passing for a great lord, while he, industrious and painstaking Tizio, had to sit on a high stool, and count other people's cash. He took off his coat with a gesture of irritation, and put on a lustre jacket, and awaited the customers. His morning task consisted in passing money through the brass railing which protected the money boxes and tills inside, or in accepting foreign coin for notes. He was sick of spinning metal pieces on the little marble slate to discover whether they had the true music in them. He was far more interested in scrutinising the faces

of the customers, and sometimes he counted the money more slowly than usual if a face happened to have any useful little human lesson written on it. In summer the flies became a torment in the close office, because, although Italians are careless about the welfare of animals, they allow flies to multiply as if they were sacred. They never destroy them. By means of paper tassels fixed to the ends of poles they only flip them from one side of the room to the other. Thus Tizio in the midst of a calculation used to whip them with his paper whip, only to allow them to gather buzzing round his head again if he paused for an instant. But all that day his thoughts followed, like menaces, the lucky Maddaloni.

Meantime the carriage was well on its way to the village which still bears the Maddaloni name. The broad road was inch deep in dust, and great clouds swept over the carriage as the carts of oranges and vegetables rushed past toward Naples. They felt the heat increasing as they left the sea. Parasols were a feeble protection from the sun, and soon Rebecca and her mother were dizzy with sleep. But Maddaloni talked incessantly. He had taken with him the old guide-books to the city, by Sigismondo and Celano, who wrote with much enthusiasm about Naples. And as they drove along he pointed out to them the remains of old civilisation, broken pillars, and fragments of gates and tombs which marked

some period in Roman or Lombard rule. Soon they had passed the great Bourbon palace of Caserta, to which Hector pointed with a gesture of scorn. It was with a blush he confessed that more than once a Maddaloni had served the infamous race. Rebecca noticed that his pride of family was not an empty and vulgar boast, but a matter of devotion and zeal. And now they were approaching his own village or township of Maddaloni as he called it, which the modern tourist sees in a hurried glance as he passes in the train. Behind and above lies old Caserta, lonely and desolate among the harsh hills, with its towers like great broken teeth gaping up. They were already at Maddaloni itself, and were under the shadow of the two towers which guard the valley. They drove through the narrow village street and there were cries of "The Maddaloni! The Maddaloni!" when the poorer people recognised Hector, and crowded round the carriage for alms.

"Your village is not clean," said Mrs. Morpeth smiling.

"No," he admitted; "but I shall show you some of our villagers threshing the gold wheat. There, look!" and he made the coachman stop.

They looked through a short lane, and at the end of it saw a yard where ten peasants, bare to the loins, were threshing the wheat. Five were ranged on each side, and there was a heap of

gold grain in the midst. One of them was singing to keep the beat of the flails regular. Then there was a pause, and the overseer cried, "A paglia, a pagila!" (To the straw!) at which women ran in to gather and remove the empty stalks. Mrs. Morpeth sent some money to the men, and the carriage moved up the steep ascent to the castle. They alighted at the gates, but it took them a quarter of an hour to reach the inner gate of the castle itself. Of the two towers, one is built higher up the slope and the other lower down, but in a direct line with each other, so that a bow-shot separates them. The towers are battered, but are still clutching the earth and rock tenaciously with feudal rootage. At the sight of broken bulwarks and tumbled walls the Maddaloni muttered "A ruin!" Rebecca noticed that his desire was to build it all up again. The lower tower acted as a watch on the side next the valley, and is surrounded by a circular wall with loopholes for cannon, a sort of outpost of defence. The nature of the ground had prevented the construction of a moat. But the castle proper, which is in the form of a rectangle, seemed to be specially guarded by the tower further up.

"If I could rebuild all this!" exclaimed Maddaloni, vexed that the strangers should see the fallen walls, while Rebecca felt a sympathy with his desire.

"I would like to climb one of the towers," she said. "Mother, will you come?"

"No," said Mrs. Morpeth; "not in this heat. Go with the Count. I shall sit on this stone, and wait."

"Let us go to the one higher up, then," said Hector. "The stair of this one is all broken."

They went up, and he turned a huge key in the iron door, and the noise of the opening of it echoed to the top. When they had climbed the last stair they were both out of breath. The view of the vast valley broke upon them. Vesuvius was smoking like a huge earth torch toward the sea. All round were the signs of places that had disappeared, but which had left fragments of themselves to mark where pages of the world's history had been torn out. She conjured up what must have been the struggles of her companion's house when feudalism was having its day. Many a booted Maddaloni had walked the tower to descry the plain. The formation of the terraced vineyards became now clearly visible, and they saw far below the remains of the gardens of their delight (*Giardini delle delizie*). A few cypress trees stand round the heights to remind the spectators that the world passeth away. But in the gardens there are still date-trees that had been brought long ago from the north of Africa, pomegranates, figs, oleanders and myrtles, soft roses of Pæstum and Damascus,

and old roots of vines, long tramped upon, but struggling back to the light of the sun. Below is the mysterious valley, vine full, covered by flax and maize growing beneath the vines, and watched over by the mysterious hill of fire. Soon it would be July, the month of the Lion Sun as they call it (*sole leone*), when the flax is cut and the green reeds lie flat on the earth to dry, the month when the grapes are no larger than peas, but when their leaves are loveliest "green rushing" to their perfection. It is the month when the vine creeps from tree to tree, burdening each with bundles of grapes. Beech, oak, fig and chestnut, all the trees indeed round which the vine can stretch its arms are bound together in circles by great garlands of vines, in a sort of mute dance and rhyme of loveliness.

The wondrous south began to find a response in Rebecca. The austere English ideal to which she had been bred and the joyous paganism of Italy appeared to be confronting each other. She seemed to see a new world. There began a mild cross-questioning among all the powers of her being. What joyous accident had brought her to the little place called Maddaloni? What rhyme of love was this suddenly at her lips? She looked adorable in her summer skirt, white bodice, and simple hat of blue cornflowers. And her soft blue eyes looked toward her companion as if to express her joy and bewilderment.

Maddaloni's frankness and grace, his youth and his ambitions began to rouse her out of her English reserve. But a certain fear, a certain discouragement, made her confine the conversation to impersonal limits. Hector had the negative qualities so essential to a lover. But the limits of his own fortune pressed him sorely, and made him helpless before great wealth. Rebecca, however, knew nothing of it yet. It is a peculiar truth that the unobtrusive use of personal charms, and the indifference with which they sometimes appear to be worn, have an influence more magnetic than a conscious display of them. Rebecca had been touched, and her romance was kindling.

"Mamma looks like a speck far below," she said, and called down.

Maddaloni waved his handkerchief, and Mrs. Morpeth waved hers in return.

"I'll finish my letter to papa," she said, "and tell him about this."

"I'm coming to England in Autumn," he said; "may we see each other?"

"O, yes, I am glad," said Rebecca, while a faint blush covered her face.

"We're to be at Vacca's to-night," said Hector. "I suppose we should start now."

On the way back Mrs. Morpeth asked about Vacca. Maddaloni said he was very popular and well known in Naples, and very rich, and that

the best people went about him, as they would see to-night. And indeed it was a brilliant gathering at Vacca's villa in honour of the English guests. Things were so arranged that Madaloni took Rebecca in to dinner, while Vacca had Mrs. Morpeth. Rebecca was again surprised to see Tizio sitting opposite to her. He had made a very careful toilet, and seemed as good as any one in the room. He only bowed to her, however, and seemed absorbed in what his partner was saying, a certain Eloisa, a Neapolitan beauty whose dark hair contrasted strangely with Rebecca's gold.

"Your distinguished husband, madame," said Vacca to Mrs. Morpeth, "has not visited Naples for a long time. But I think he is well represented. If you will permit me I shall say that you and your daughter are so like, that praise of the one means praise of the other. Not since Lady Hamilton was here——"

"Oh," said Mrs. Morpeth interrupting him, "did *you* see Lady Hamilton?"

"Now, madame, I protest that is unfeeling!" said Vacca. "I do confess I am nearer my last cradle, which is our coffin, than my first, which is that one our mothers rock, but what a way to break the truth to me!"

And the old usurer shook his sides with laughter.

"In all this company," he then said, "which

of the men would you suppose to have the best head ? ”

“ Well,” replied Mrs. Morpeth, “ I suppose a banker has sharper wits than most people.”

“ Ah, you would dole compliments this time,” said Vacca ; “ but you are, if you will permit me to say, wrong.”—And then he whispered Maddaloni’s name.

“ He looks it,” said Mrs. Morpeth.

“ He will be a political force some day,” said Vacca. “ You English are interested in politics, which few of us ever think about. But Maddaloni will do something among our bag-men. There is the extinct dukedom waiting for him.”

“ He is quite charming,” said Mrs. Morpeth.

After dinner the Maddaloni was asked to sing.

“ Notice the song he has chosen,” whispered Tizio to Vacca. “ It’s for the blonde lady ! ”

Tizio then accompanied the piano, while the Maddaloni sang in Italian —

“ Lady of the golden hair
And happy lips.
Dear lady, never maiden
Half so fair ! ”

When Tizio came back to Vacca he whispered,
“ But she doesn’t understand a word ! ”

“ Doesn’t she, doesn’t she ! ” said Vacca shaking his sides again. “ Love, like prayer, is polyglot !
Ha ! ha ! ”

CHAPTER III

IN a letter to Lady Babington, Mrs. Morpeth wrote:—"I really think Rebecca is falling in love with a young fellow here (an Italian!) the last of the Maddaloni, on whom it seems the extinct dukedom may be conferred. He is very amiable and clever, and Vacca, my husband's agent here, says that people about the Court and in Government circles talk of him already. He is burning for the regeneration of Naples, and is credited with the desire for the ascendancy of his own family. He is very good looking. I am amused at Rebecca's shyness and silence. The silence especially! But we who are mothers ought to be as considerate in these matters as we wish our own mothers had been. Of course it is too early to think of anything yet, but I do leave them alone occasionally, especially since we are leaving very soon. I think women begin to understand what love affairs really are only very late—when they have an opportunity of watching those of their own children! Now isn't it true, dear Lady B.? Say nothing, of course, to my husband. This is all a secret. It is only Rebecca's first little dream, and I tell you it because I know you love her. I suppose my husband would be very

angry at my indiscretion. He hates foreigners, you know. There is to be a great ball in honour of us, it seems, at Maddaloni Palace, and the young fellow is going to do the thing superbly. How we shall be able to dance in the heat is more than I can guess. We shall be fanning each other, that's all. There are still some smart Neapolitans in town. They go very late to the bathing-places. I am glad that I took Rebecca away from London for a year. It is doing her a great deal of good. But we shall be glad to be home again. You would be amused at the way the people stare here. I think the women are great dolls compared with ourselves, and are badly educated. Give my love to the Cayleys, etc. . . ."

But Mrs. Morpeth forgot what she wrote to Lady B., and mentioned in a letter to her husband the very thing she told Lady B. to keep secret. Among the heap of letters waiting for him on his desk in his private room in Lombard Street, the banker saw one marked private in his wife's handwriting. She had given an amusing account of the progress of the Maddaloni wooing. He could hardly believe his eyes. If ever a father had watched jealousy over his daughter, it was he. Long ago he had warned Mrs. Morpeth that he would tolerate no meddling in the matter. It was not merely that his affection for

Rebecca, which, in spite of his austerity, was perfectly sincere, made him careful in his selection of those whom he allowed to approach her, but the fact that his immense fortune would eventually become hers, made him anxious regarding the character of the man who was to share it. There were few things about which he was nervous, but this was one of them. He feared Rebecca's sentimentalism, and did everything to discourage and crush it. "Don't bring any ethereal jackanapes here," he used to say. His vast undertakings never interfered with his sleep at night as they often do in the case of many a successful man, who at last breaks down under the strain. But the fear that Rebecca by an ill choice might imperil his legacies to her or cause him to deprive her of them, haunted him continually. Therefore he had specially warned his wife to watch over her during their stay abroad, to which, indeed, he had only reluctantly and after a great deal of coaxing, given his consent. Man of the world, he was too well aware that in the ardour of a first affection and the stirrings of love, the sort of consideration he would bring to bear upon his daughter, would be useless. Therefore, it was necessary to take care as to what and whom she saw. He despised almost every kind of emotion, and women he considered to be only the highest type possible to hysterical things. For instance, it irritated

him to see with what careless ease his wife spent large sums, which it had taken the cunning of his brain and the precaution of long experience to win. All women in society, he declared, lived in doll's houses, ignorant of the terrible waste of heart and brain which a man must undergo before he obtains even a foothold in the world. Pledging every day the activity of his wits to the extent of many thousands, he had a just scorn for those who are blind to the intellectual vigour required for large business operations, and certainly it was not to be expected that he could welcome as his son-in-law a penniless foreign dreamer who had no knowledge of the struggle of life at all. He took fright at his wife's description of a gilded youth with a foreign name. At home there were gilded youths enough, but if it had never entered his head to give Rebecca to any one of them, still less would he dream of parting with her to an utter stranger. The truth was that Mrs. Morpeth had never understood her husband's character. She had indeed given up Anglicanism at his asking, and had sat out the services at the little Church of the Redeemer. She had even reduced, at his bidding the number of the gayer set who were anxious to continue their visits to Pont Street, and who never received anything except a cold reception at his hands. But she was irritated at what she called his lack of social push. It was not enough for

her that he should sit solid in his Bank, lending an indifferent ear to the proposals of titled persons, who in return for borrowed money might have made his way easy to a seat in the Upper House. He was too shrewd not to know that behind every aristocracy the world has ever seen, there is a plutocracy more or less disguised, and that money is the root of all social success, or at least in nine out of ten cases an indispensable part of it. He would have said that rank is certainly far more than the guinea stamp, but would have added that it generally makes a miserable show without the guineas. It used to amuse him to compare the amount of attention paid to rank, combined with splendour, compared to the amount paid to it when its purse is empty. He could not but take a financier's view of society. And when noble lords embarked in speculations, dabbled in stocks and shares or floated companies, he was not surprised either at their motives or their losses. The fact that a man's needs increase with his gains he took to be the peculiar law which governs all the operations of human vanity. The basis of the modern world, he said, is a cash and credit basis. And it was because he was able to exchange, in the technical language of bankers, his credit for the debts of other people, buying their debts and bills on a large scale and selling them again at a large profit, that he was so "substantial" as Vacca had

described him to be. If he had been anxious for a merely aristocratic marriage for Rebecca, he would have encouraged Lord Rufus or Lord Longridge to play a game of billiards at Pont Street much oftener than they did. But he had no intention of exchanging his money for a son-in-law with a title. Rufus and Longridge had heavy betting debts, so that when they came to Pont Street they received no more consideration than other guests, and far less than Francis Roland. The future son-in-law, since he was in a special sense to take the place of a son, would have to show himself a fit inheritor. But an Italian for Rebecca! He almost swore at the thought. His agent at Naples, a certain Vacca, did not by any means present the best balance-sheet at the end of the year. Vacca had been introduced by a former consul as a shrewd man, fit to open and conduct a branch of the Morpeth bank. Shrewd he certainly was, as Mr. Morpeth found out in his first interview, but there had been some curious transactions in loans which had threatened to become irredeemable, and the banker looked rather askance at the Neapolitan undertaking. Of course, he could not forget that the first people to open banks had been Italians, and it was they, too, who really created the great modern system of credit. But in business with them it was always difficult to know whether they were for you or against you, and they were

eventually "slippery." In any case, to bring an Italian as son-in-law into the bosom of an English family such as the Morpeth's, seemed the best way of bringing about nothing short of a domestic riot. Was his wife mad? He began to think that perhaps Rebecca had already given herself away. For all she knew, this might only be their tardy acknowledgment of an accomplished fact. He was excited all day, and he despatched a telegram ordering his wife and Rebecca home.

"The ball, mother!" said Rebecca, as they read the telegram; "we can't leave."

"Of course not," said her mother; "what does he mean? It's his usual selfishness."

She telegraphed back asking if he was ill, but he replied by another peremptory message.

"Your father's blaspheming in telegrams," said Mrs. Morpeth.

"He may be ill, and is angry that we are staying away so long," said Rebecca, blushing.

"Oh, no!" said her mother. "I know why he's angry. Stupid, fidgety Dick. He thinks you're engaged."

Rebecca could have replied that he was not far wrong; but she bit her lip, and held her tongue. Her mother wrote that they would be back in a month, and told him to calm himself. Then he thought of stopping money supplies. But the day before Mrs. Morpeth had presented to Vacca

one of her husband's cheques for a large amount.

"Ah!" said Vacca smiling, as Tizio counted out the money, "I think we *have* seen this signature before!"

Meantime his wife's obstinacy enraged the banker, but he awaited their arrival, endeavouring to suppress his anger, and hoping that all things were well. He wrote to Rebecca warning her of his displeasure, and when she replied, successfully manœuvring the subject, he was almost ashamed of his display of nervousness. It meant that he was getting old and hysterical. But he consoled himself that perhaps it was because he had been leading a bachelor's life for six months, and because his wife and daughter had been so long absent, that he had become so irritable. He longed especially for Rebecca, and wrote her tender little notes.

"Why are you frightening me, little one?" he wrote. In none of her replies did she ever mention the stranger's name.

"My daughter has a head," he used to say with pride, when he saw that Rufus and Longridge made no impression on her. "She will not throw herself away on the first pretty jackanapes who presents himself." He had said to old Jerdan: "My daughter will marry an Englishman, a good Englishman, and at my death I will make them a present of my bank."

"Well," replied Jerdan, "don't let her travel. These girls come whimpering home. I've seen lots of 'em. They pine for Italian skies and eyes and such things, and there's no keepin' 'em at home afterward."

This warning began to be remembered by the banker again. But he had faith in Rebecca. He decided that he would deal far more gently with her once she was home. Hitherto he had ridiculed all her sentimentalism in the effort to create a strong character in her. But he began to be afraid lest fathers ran a great risk of alienating daughters by violent and dogmatic interference. No; no, he would *lead* Rebecca. She was a sensible girl. He began to think that he would prepare the way for her. Doubtless he would have to submit to the loss of her when she was married, but he was even glad at the prospect of a good son-in-law. There was the bank to take care of, and he liked to believe that after he was dead and gone, it would be in good hands. Only one of the fellows who came about the house seemed to win respect and even affection from the taciturn old man.

This was Frank Roland, a captain in the Life Guards, and a son of one of his old friends. The banker used to say that he loved the army, and that if he had not been a banker he would have been a soldier. He had found clear and steady heads among soldiers. He had met some

of them who had shown great business capacity. Above all, they had discipline and control of themselves. Roland's father had been a school-fellow of Morpeth, and had become a general. Naturally he was interested in his friend's son. Frank had endless pluck, and there was nothing sinister in his blue eyes. He looked the sort of fellow who would die for a woman or a flag. A safe man, thought the wary old banker, loyal to old English ways. If Rebecca ever got a husband as straight as Roland, her father would be content. He had sufficient capital. The Rolands held property in the city which became more valuable every year, and Frank had inherited the greater part of it. His mother had died in his infancy, and it was perhaps due to his isolated training that he was bashful and ill-at-ease in the presence of women. But he was always welcome at Pont Street, and when Mrs. Morpeth and Rebecca were in Naples, he used to come of an evening to play billiards with the old fellow, and keep him cheery.

"You see," said the banker, "I don't go out much now. I shall wait till my wife comes back."

"Where are they now?" asked Roland.

"At Naples. I wish they were at home."

"Does Rebecca like it?"

"Oh, she calls it the city of the Sun, or some such high sounding thing."

"When are they coming home?" asked Roland.

"Soon, I think. It's to be hoped so. I was against it from the first, you know."

"Oh, Rebecca will be so much the better for it, Mr. Morpeth," said Roland. "She promised to write me, but she hasn't."

"Your poor father used to say that he hoped he would see you high up my boy."

"You'll live to see it instead," said Roland, "I hope."

"Let's hope so too, Frank," said the old man, and smiled solemnly.

Roland used to ask his advice on investments, and the banker told him that legitimate speculation in stocks and shares was one of the best sorts of training for a man's wits. He defended what he called "proper speculation," which he said was a science as strict as physics or chemistry, and as innocent. You simply sat and watched the action of business quantities, in some cases predicting the results, in others experimenting with their properties toward new results. The Stock Market was one of the most amazing inventions of the human brain, and offered to a man with a clear head a huge field of observation and instruction. He used to recount to Roland the history of stocks from their first appearance in the eighteenth century, up to their extraordinary development in the crowded mark-

ets of to-day. After all, was it dishonest to do what is called rigging the market? Once when a company was in a "very shaky condition" he had bought up all the available stock, as nervous people were rapidly selling it out, and had thus created a scarcity, whereupon confidence was re-established, and those who had sold out began to buy again. He had made large profits. Was it right, he asked. And he answered that of course it was. Had the company burst, who knows how many women and children would have been thrown out of doors. Consols, he said, were nothing but a huge national lottery and speculation to the extent of eight thousand millions sterling. One's conscience need not be troubled. It was curious to see him reading Wyclif at night, after a day spent in successful combat with Mammon, and he rejoiced when he came across any passage in which the wonderful old reformer denounces the theory that the children of God are to remain beggars, and surrender everything to the Church. "No, no," he would say, "Rebecca shall have almost it all."

Roland used to look at him with admiration when he repeated Wyclif's diatribes against the Church, such as, "They made property of ghostly goods where property may not be!" or the vigorous arraignment in one of the tracts, where he convicts the priests of stealing "earthly muck" from those to whom it belonged. Roland was

anxious to stand well with him, and listened intently to his harangues on the financial state of the world. He told him that the Stock Exchange while it was the craftiest device of the human brain, contained within it the seeds of extraordinary moral cowardice. Half the nervous diseases that have appeared in modern times emanate from it. "But, ah! I've never lost my head, my boy, never!"

"There was," he said, "no greater coward in face of danger than the Stock Exchange. It goes into hysterics at a mere rumour, like a woman. Never sell out, my boy, if there is a sudden fall."

Roland said he had an odd thousand to invest, and asked what he should do with it. The old banker was anxious to see if he had any wits for business.

"What to do?" he said; "well then, there is a book I will give you in which you will find the fluctuation in dividends for the last fifteen years. I shall not tell you what to invest in. Choose yourself. But I'll help you out if you make a big mistake. Don't employ a broker. Go direct to the jobbers. Frequent Throgmorton Street and watch things for yourself."

Roland, a little nervous, took the book, and went home to study it. He wished to do something audacious. At first he thought of investing in Home Rails, being the safest, but the margin

of profits if he sold out again would be too small. It was necessary, therefore, to speculate. There was a chance of buying £10,000 stock in a mining concern, but he did not wish to disturb his invested capital, and would therefore require to borrow. He applied to his bank, where his credit was good, and obtained a loan with which he bought the stock. Shortly after there came a rise, and he instantly sold out with a profit of £600. He had taken no advice, but had only watched the markets for himself. He came back to Pont Street, and the old banker shook him gleefully by the hand.

"Well done, my boy," he said, astonished, and feeling sure that Roland was precisely the sort of fellow he was looking for. He told him to come oftener, and they had long talks. Roland was a great lover of horses. Did he bet, perhaps? The old man was rather anxious on the point, and once turned the conversation to it.

"Well," said Roland, apologetically, "if a fellow has watched a horse and knows what to expect of him and his rivals, I don't see much difference between laying money on him or laying it on any other concern."

"It's like putting money in a good *going* concern, you think?" said Mr. Morpeth, laughing.

"Why, yes," said Roland; "when you buy up stock it's like backing the winner, isn't it? I

never bet except when I know the horse, and have watched him."

"Quite so, my boy," said Mr. Morpeth, screwing his eyes, and perhaps a little perturbed. "I never bet myself, but if I did, that's how I'd do it. It's amazing how many things we can explain away."

Roland began to think that the old fellow was on his side, and became impatient for Rebecca's return.

But Rebecca had meantime more to think about than stocks and shares and her father's projects. Hector, indeed, was forced to think of how best to win money. He was far keener on the subject than Roland, and much less expert. He had no money at all, and he felt that there is no poverty so degrading as the poverty of the well born. He had inherited debts, and inheritance of debts is sufficient to make almost any man a criminal. His land was mortgaged, and Vacca was surety. His ambitions were out of all proportion to his means. He felt in a rage against life. Perhaps he was not essentially a weak man, but he was hopelessly entangled among the usurers. Poverty acts as a stimulus only to those who have never known wealth. It desolates and paralyses those whose wealth has forsaken them. They scorn the necessity of keeping life in. Hector remembered that while his father used to appear in Naples with splendid

horses and carriages, there was hardly anything to eat at home. There was something pathetic in his attempt to revive, single-handed, the fortunes of his house once they were in his own keeping. His friends used to say that a rich wife would do it for him. Up to a certain point he had done well. The villa at Sorrento was still his, but his mistake had been his attempt to buy back the palace of the Maddaloni. After the old duke had died in 1848, it had been vulgarised by having been let out to various tenants. Hector determined to preserve it. His dream of securing the extinct dukedom for himself led him into these ambitious projects, and yet some maintained that strictly he had no right to the name Maddaloni. At any rate, by Vacca's help, he had secured rights to the property, but he was paying his interest irregularly. Like all Neapolitans he had a passion for making money at cards which, instead of being, as they think, the easiest, is the most difficult way of all. He was essentially impractical. His brief appearance in Parliament had only increased his expenses, and although he had been talked about, no solid advantage had ever come to him. He had done everything to win a place, but he had not yet been employed in the government. Besides card-playing he chose another of the worst methods of relieving fortune—a method sanctioned by his country, but which is the ruin of the people.

This was the State lottery, upon which he spent all his available cash in the vain hope that some day his would be the winning number. In vain Garibaldi attempted to suppress this insane institution. Regularly every Saturday, about four o'clock, a motley crowd gathers round the offices where the winning numbers are announced. There are ninety of them to be chosen in any order, and the government pledges itself to pay the bearer of the winning ticket in some cases as much as two thousand five hundred times the amount staked. Needless to say the immense hazard of the game saves the government in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand. Cavour called it a voluntary tax which the people impose on themselves. The passion for it burns strongest in Naples, and Hector was perhaps the greatest dupe in the city. It was curious that he should be studying as earnestly as his future father-in-law, but in a manner so different, the best way of winning coin. Very seldom he chanced on a lucky number, but if, for instance, he had won fifty francs in one week, it made him bolder for the next, and he staked ever larger and larger amounts. Vacca, who leased from the government four of the little offices where deposits are left for the lottery, compelled him to play nowhere else, so that he always knew what the Maddaloni was winning. Being his private debtor, Hector could not complain when

the terrible little usurer withheld payment if the fortunate youth happened to be successful. And sometimes he knew it was useless to go with his winning ticket. And so he began to play in other offices not presided over by Vacca's clerks. When Vacca asked him why he had ceased playing he shrugged his shoulders, and said he had lost faith. The four shops which Vacca rented for the purpose of the lottery were almost as remunerative to him as the operations of the Morpeth Bank. For every ticket sold he received a commission from the government. No one knew that Vacca held them, because the government never permits the lessee's name to appear. Some of the bureaux are more popular than others, because of certain superstitions of those who frequent them. If, for instance, one happened to be situated near the shrine of a favourite saint, the devotee would play in it rather than in another. Hector always deposited his stakes in the little shop which Vacca kept close to the great church of Santa Chiara in the very street where the drawing takes place. The superstition for numbers which has taken hold of Naples like a sort of popular Pythagoreanism remained active in him, and he used to dream of huge winnings. There are stories told of the most abject poor, who play the borrowed value of the last rag they have on them in the last hope of winning a few francs. It would be long cer-

tainly before Hector would fall so low, but he was meanwhile straining his resources to their utmost in a frantic effort to win. He trusted in his luck, and Tizio, who had no love for him, thought that at last the luck was going to be amazing.

As soon as it became known that Rebecca had "caught fire," as Vacca put it, the old usurer and his clerk conceived a new interest in the Maddaloni. He felt inclined to forgive him for his debts in prospect of the enormous profits that might come later out of the alliance. To be money lenders to the heir of a great English bank was a thing that happened once in a lifetime only. Vacca had visions of all sorts of profit. He encouraged the Maddaloni to give the talked-of ball. Maddaloni palace could be made grand and imposing again by borrowed lights and flowers. Only those who know to what a vast extent usury and blackmail darken Neapolitan life will be able to understand Vacca's persistent persecution of Hector. But when he chose he could become perfectly bland and easy to all his prey. So that when he came to the empty palace to watch the preparations made for filling it with suitable furniture and was joined by Tizio, who lives in Little Oak Street (Vicolo della Quercia), which is only a few paces away, it was a relief to the unfortunate youth to discover that the busy little usurer had sud-

denly become obtrusively kind. "You see, Maddaloni," he whispered, so as not to let the workmen hear, "I have no doubt that when the lady comes to see this gorgeous hall, she will be awestruck at your magnificence. Now come, bring us to the nuptial room."

Hector became very pleased and blushed, and smiled, saying that she was a fine English girl, and that he would not deny to them his love for her. He then led the way to the great bedroom. The walls were hung with faded crimson damask satin, similar to the curtains round the large bed and to the bed-quilt which covered it. The windows which looked into Toledo Street were closed by shutters and screens, to protect the decorations from the sun, and as Hector opened them a flood of light filled the room.

"She shall sleep here," said Vacca, "here, here," as he slapped the satin quilt.

"Would to God!" said Maddaloni, while Tizio grew paler. "It was on this bed the last duke was born, and, who knows, the next may be born here too!"

Tizio was standing silent, looking round the room. It was strange to think that the Maddaloni was only tenant on sufferance in the great palace, but that in a moment everything might be changed if the English girl declared her love. Hector had all the air of a man in presence of his debtors and accusers, but there was a slight firm-

ness of tone which came of renewed hopes and schemes, and he could bear to look at Tizio for a little. Yes, it would be a great ball. He was trying his utmost to do the thing as superbly, but also as economically as possible.

"That's right," said Vacca, approvingly, with a twinkle in his eyes. "She'll pay for it! Any gains recently at the lottery?"

Hector shrugged his shoulders as he replied, "A matter of twenty francs."

"Keep it," said Vacca.

"It will hardly pay for her bouquet to-night," said Tizio, smiling bitterly.

Hector felt ashamed that his love had become the property of those two men. His pride was wounded. The tyranny of the usurer was making life a horror to him, and he longed to escape. Rebecca had come, and he knew she loved him as he never loved her. He knew that her English heart contained many a thing that would be alien to his own, and that perhaps it was only his youth and grace which had attracted her to him. And yet no daughter of the South had ever won his affections either. No scandal or calumny had ever stained his name. His desire to rebuild his fortunes seemed to monopolise all his being, and he sacrificed all other affections in the attempt. Every one knew that his master passion was the acquisition of wealth. It was this which dislocated his character. He led a solitary life, turn-

ing over the books in the old library of the palace, or burying, in a dream of the past, his present misery. Except when hurrying to the declaration of the lottery, he was seldom seen in the streets. How he had contrived to avoid complete bankruptcy was a puzzle to his friends. Although outwardly he maintained the dignity of his house, it was known that he made a poor display inside. The great palace was gloomy and dark with want. It was a matter of jest that one tottering old woman and one serving boy kept it clean, whereas in the great old days twenty servants would not have been sufficient. There was an extraordinary parsimony in tapers and lights. Maddaloni might have been seen reading by the light of a solitary candle in the vast library, whereas a hundred candles would have lit it only tolerably well. His dinner, which generally consisted of a dish of maccaroni and a bottle of light wine, was served here. He gave confidences to no one, unless they were wrung from him by men like Vacca and Tizio. Because he took no very important part in the smart life of the town, he began to be considered as a misanthrope and solitary, and people suspected him of a seriousness which he did not actually possess. He shut himself up in the immense house, dreaming his dream of the redemption of its old glory. Those were the days before the final ruin, when the palace became vulgarised

by being let to dressmakers and advocates. When Hector was there it still possessed its old dignity, even although meaner buildings had elbowed up against it on the south side. Once it stood isolated, as the old writers say, flanking four roads, one of which is now called Madaloni Street. But long before Hector's advent it had seen one ephemeral building after another perish around it. The stranger may still admire its vast oak and iron gates which lead to the central courtyard, its broad windows and the carving of its columns. The sun still streams into the old halls, especially on the eastern side, between eleven o'clock and noon. Tufts of grass are growing here and there on the roof, and the long cornice which faces three streets is curved and twisted with age. The marble statues of which Celano speaks, have disappeared, although the huge panel on the roof of the ballroom, where Rebecca danced her heart away, and which celebrates the entrance of the Aragons into Naples, may still be seen.

It is the ballroom which is the chief spectacle of the whole palace, and on the night of Hector's ball presented a gorgeous appearance. Luckily for his purse its own permanent decorations dispensed with the need of any other. But by help of Vacca he had secured hundreds of plants, whose green foliage contrasted beautifully with the gold trellis-work and panelling. The very

mirrors which reflected the gay crowd that night, and through which Rebecca saw Tizio watching her intently, are still on the walls. Lady Hamilton had once danced in the same room, but it was doubtful whether, as Hector told Rebecca, Lord Nelson had been there also. A narrow gallery with balconies and loggias runs round the hall with a space for the musicians. The decorations must once have been gorgeous, but any one who loves old dim gold will see enough of it laid on in floral masses, or in the columns of the pillars, creating, when the sun is in the room, a magnificent scintillating effect. The windows open on to balconies whose balustrades are of wrought copper.

Maddaloni was anxiously awaiting Rebecca. He felt proud in being able to receive her in such a room. In the privations he was suffering he consoled himself by the hope that the folly of his undertaking was at least mitigated by the amount of pleasure it would give her. But he was chiefly anxious to discover what she would say of it all. It was not so much his love for her, but hers for him which occupied his thoughts. She was rich, he was poor, and it was bitter, bitter. Yet no casual visitors would have supposed that the owner of the splendidly illuminated palace was so poor. The rooms were brilliant with the guests, and one whispered to another to inquire what had happened to cause the Maddaloni

to burst forth in such splendour. Some went to Vacca, but he, too, held up his hands in amazement and gave no clue. If the long years of obscurity and economy which Maddaloni was known to have endured had led to this as the result, they were surely worth the humiliation. The gloomy building had changed as if by magic into a sumptuous palace full of light and the signs of pleasure. Maddaloni received his guests at the great door of the ballroom. The old Duke d'Avena, to whom he was indebted for an introduction to Rebecca, came in smiling at the transformation, and whispered encouraging words to the young host. Even Vacca and Tizio appeared pleased, and Hector offered them his hand with unusual frankness.

"Surely," whispered Tizio to him aside, "I shall have a dance with her, one dance!"

"We shall see, Tizio, I shall try."

"I shall have a dance with her, Maddaloni, do you hear?"

"Very well, Tizio, if it is her pleasure. Ah! she comes."

Maddaloni hurried forward to greet her. "Oh, she is lovely!" one or two exclaimed, as he led her and her mother toward a seat near the open balconies, where the soft night air of Naples was a relief from the heat inside. Mrs. Morpeth was astonished at the splendour of the old ballroom, and asked Maddaloni to explain the huge cartoon

on the roof. But his eyes were all for Rebecca, and dancing was soon to begin. The women had heard of Bond Street, from which Rebecca's gown had come. The gown was exquisite in its simplicity. It was made of ivory satin, with broad pearl trimming, the only touch of colour being the pink rose she wore in her hair, and which was given by Hector. One string of pearls fastened by a diamond clasp round her neck was her only ornament. Even her mother thought she had seldom looked so beautiful. A hundred jealous eyes were upon Maddaloni, but Vacca came up to him whispering his joke.

"Now, Rosa," he said, "don't be a thorn, be a rose in her side!"

Two dances had gone, and he had danced both of them with her. Courtesy to the other guests forbade that he should so dance every one, and he was obliged to give her up to ask a favour which was no favour from the other ladies. And it was then that he almost shook when he saw Tizio go up to crave a dance from Rebecca. She seemed astonished and refused, saying that it was too hot. She agreed to "sit out" with him. Tizio's eyes shone on her half in defiance, but he took her to one of the balconies. After all, it was luckier to be able to sit there in the cool and the dark with her!

Maddaloni was inflamed with excitement and jealousy. He imagined that Tizio might be

putting her against him. He might be telling her that the host of the evening was a beggar and almost a bankrupt. In a frenzy he finished the dance, and left his partner, and came to the balcony.

"I was telling the lady," said Tizio, "that all Naples has got to know her, and watches for her as if she were the queen."

"True," said Hector, dryly.

"And I am telling him," said Rebecca with a rippling laugh, "that in England boys do not get asked to balls."

Hector then invited her to dance again, and they went, leaving Tizio raging on the balcony. Meantime Vacca had been asking Mrs. Morpeth what were her impressions of the Maddaloni and of the ballroom. He took her through the vestibules.

"It's all magnificent," she said.

But he did not take her into the empty rooms, nor down the carpetless stairs.

"If it happened to be daytime, madame, you would see the sun on the gold pillars. This is one of the finest palaces in Naples."

"The Maddaloni," said Mrs. Morpeth, "is a fortunate youth."

"Ah, yes," replied Vacca, "he has a head. He is not like the other young men here who waste themselves so quickly. Do you know, madame, that this young fellow shuts himself up in his

library, and reads all day. Shall I get you an ice, madame?"

Vacca came back with the ice.

"You remember, madame, that Campanella, a worthy friar in his day, but hot-headed and a great revolutionary, says in his famous *City of the Sun*, that the inhabitants never ate ices there, and he blames us Neapolitans for our fondness of them."

"Really?" said Mrs. Morpeth, "I think your own city is a city of the sun. Such a sun it is."

"I believe," said Vacca, who loved to talk, "that Campanella was thinking all the time of Naples when he wrote that book, and built his new city after this as a model."

"I am sorry we must leave it so soon," said Mrs. Morpeth.

"The Maddaloni will be vexed, too," replied Vacca, "but your husband will be anxious for your return."

"He is very anxious," said Mrs. Morpeth.

"I suppose he adores his daughter."

"Yes, he is very strict with her, like most English fathers."

"Ah!" said Vacca, "he is wise. He will take care to whom he gives that treasure, and his other treasure!"

Hector's friends seemed to be offended at the exclusive attention he was paying to his English

guests. He had danced most of the dances with Rebecca. Tizio had spent half the night on the balcony looking now into the crowded room, now into the quiet of the street below, summing up all his rage against the lucky count. Every one saw that the English girl had been won. She had eyes only for her host. Tizio pulled the Maddaloni aside as he was leaving the ballroom with Rebecca to go to the dressing-room, and he whispered, "she is leaving? You will kiss her to-night, I believe!" The Maddaloni, with his eyes aflame, looked at him and said nothing. "I shall ask one thing," said Tizio. "You have won her, I know. We all see it. But I shall ask one thing and it is this: I wish to see her kissing you. It will make me mad; but I've heard that some can find pleasure in the spectacle of other's loves. I shall see what it is like. Good God, let me see her loving you!"

Maddaloni looked at him, again astonished, and said, "She is waiting, I must go to her."

"I shall come, then," said Tizio, "I shall stand in the long corridor. Bring her under the light to let me see."

"Tizio!" exclaimed Maddaloni, and rushed out to Rebecca. It was the last night they were to see each other. He knew her now as Rebecca, and she him as Hector.

"Why hurry away?" he asked.

"My father insists on our coming home at

once," she said. "I cannot bear to go, but I must."

"Oh, when shall we see each other?"

"You are coming to England. You will live with us," she said.

Instinctively both went rapidly along the corridor into the cloakroom, as if each knew that before they parted some sign of love must be exchanged. Tizio followed and when he came near the cloakroom concealed himself behind a pillar. Maddaloni was putting on her cloak. The other guests would soon be pouring out of the ballroom. "Quick!" he said to her, "your mother may come." Tizio came out from his hiding-place. Rebecca's back was turned toward him, but Maddaloni was looking down the corridor, and saw Tizio. He kissed her under the light once, twice, so that Tizio could see her upturned face and the gold of her hair. "Oh, God!" he exclaimed involuntarily, at which Rebecca turned round and saw him.

"I hate him! He is always about; who is he?" she whispered.

"Keep away from him. He will work you harm! Let us go.

"He is mad with jealousy," whispered Maddaloni. She turned, and Tizio signed to kiss again. His frenzy seemed to be so high that at the sight of Rebecca in his enemy's arms he was able to enjoy a humiliating and inverted pleasure.

“Let us go!” said Rebecca, crimsoning with shame, conscious that Tizio was still looking on. But the Maddaloni held her under the light as if at Tizio’s bidding, and kissed the scarlet lips again, as if only for Tizio’s strange and perverted delight.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE then had come upon her unexpected, wonderful, like the first sunrise in Eden! Amid the coming and going of her hopes and fears one purpose remained fixed and dominant. She would marry the Maddaloni. His goodness or the goodness her idealising love was lending him, his splendour, his grace, his ambitions, the smile of his eyes, the sympathy of his voice, all the mysterious phalanx of qualities and powers which love discovers and regulates and redeems, had made her almost his slave. Here was liberty! Although she knew instinctively the opposition she would endure, meantime she feared nothing, and felt brave. She would face her father alone. She felt that her mother did not count. Of course, she had broken silence to her, but Mrs. Morpeth, remembering the telegrams, warned her what to expect. She began to regret her indiscretion in not having arrested Rebecca in time. She could hardly believe her ears when Rebecca said she was engaged. "What will your father say?" came instantly to her lips. But she had been indiscreet enough to encourage Rebecca at first, and had said laughing: "I would have fallen in love with him myself at your age!"

Rebecca knew, however, that her mother's support and acquiescence did not matter. It would rather harass and embitter her father all the more. "We shall not tell him all at once, you know," said Mrs. Morpeth. "I suppose he suspects a great deal, because of what I said in my letter, but we shall be as quiet as mice for some little time. And then, dear, you're not really pledged? It's safer to be cautious in these things, as your father will tell you."

"But I am pledged," said Rebecca, showing for the first time the ring the Maddaloni had put on her finger after the ball.

Mrs. Morpeth began to feel uneasy.

"Oh, then," said Rebecca, "there's no use in our going home at all. I feel there isn't."

"It may be all right," said Mrs. Morpeth, but she felt that she would get all the blame. She had even invited Hector to Pont Street. Visions of domestic trial and dispeace rose before her. She wearied and vexed Rebecca by her perpetual change of opinion. At one time she cooled in her eulogies of the stranger, at another she was warm in his praise. "After all, you know," she said, "we know very little about him, your father will make great inquiries of course." And then she weighed all that might be set against his chance of pleasing her husband. "If everything is right, I have no doubt your father will be the first to approve. I wish he had been with us. Perhaps

he may be quite pleased, though. I hope so, dear, for all our sakes!"

But Rebecca prepared herself for double ridicule and opposition. She expected that her mother would surrender as soon as she reached Pont Street. Every mile that brought them nearer London, and carried them farther from the City of the Sun, made her heart grow heavier. Letters from the Maddaloni reached them on the way, and as the distance between the two lovers increased, so their love increased. If he could only have her back at Naples! If she could only be sure that he *was* coming soon to London! As usual all the superlatives were there.

But when Rebecca arrived at her father's door her nerves were trembling. Her mother tried hard to encourage her. "He will see there is something wrong, at once, you know. Say nothing for some days." But Rebecca felt like a guilty thing in having fallen in love without his knowledge or approval. She suspected that she would never get his approval, and a feeling of sickness came over her as she entered the house. It was only when she was on the point of arriving that she began to consider how justified all his piled up objections would be. He had taught her subordination from the beginning, and she knew that he meant to choose everything for her, even the things that related to her inmost self. The tears were almost at her eyes when she met

him. He greeted them with a sort of stiff politeness, and Rebecca felt his power and solidity and his contempt for sentimentalism. Before he uttered a word, she knew she was condemned, and she was hardly a moment in the house when she wished to be out of it. Even Briggs, who opened the door and had been in the family before she was born, seemed to know all about it. She was quite conscious of her cowardice now, and had taken off her ring at the door.

"Well, how are you, and you?" asked her father, as he met them.

"We've had such a beautiful time, Dick," said Mrs. Morpeth, "and *you're* looking better."

"Well, it's not that I've been gay," he said, laughing. "There's been nobody here except Frank Roland—How's Vacca?"

"He gave us a great reception," said Mrs. Morpeth.

"Yes; but his branch of my business is by no means the most flourishing at present."

Rebecca was silent, and allowed her mother to do most of the talking.

"Well, Becky," said her father, "you're very quiet. What's wrong?"

"Why, nothing," said Rebecca. "It seems strange to be home again."

"We met such nice people," said Mrs. Morpeth.

"O did you?" said her husband, apparently indifferent.

"We thought you were ill, because you called us home so soon," said Rebecca, looking at her father.

"Soon!" exclaimed he, "you were long enough away to play all sorts of tricks, my little girl. Who's this count I've been hearing about, little miss?"

Rebecca smiled and blushed.

"Ah, he's so clever," said Mrs. Morpeth, feeling that the whole thing would be out in a few minutes. "You should see his palace. Such magnificence! He must be enormously wealthy."

"They call a hut a palace there," said Mr. Morpeth, contemptuously.

"But this is the Maddaloni palace, hundreds of years old, father," said Rebecca. "A hut!"

"Really!" he exclaimed with evidently greater interest; "but they're all beggars these people. I know from experience."

"Beggars!" repeated Mrs. Morpeth ironically, "I wish we were as rich. Such a ballroom!"

"Brilliant beggars, ma'am. Vacca will tell you."

"Vacca!" she exclaimed again. "You should just hear what he says about Hector."

"Oh, who's Hector?" asked Mr. Morpeth.

"He's the count."

"What does he do?" asked Mr. Morpeth, irritated.

"He's in Parliament."

"That's not doing anything."

"He doesn't require to do anything," said Rebecca, becoming a little bolder. "He manages his estates, but every one says he'll be a minister yet."

"It's a rotten country," said Mr. Morpeth, "next to Spain its credit is the worst in Europe."

"You've no eye for beauty, Dick," said Mrs. Morpeth. "London is a dreadful place after Naples."

But the banker showed by his manner that he wished to hear no more about it. The Italian journey was to be treated as an episode that was past. And he told Rebecca that he had drawn out for her a programme of study which he expected her diligently to follow. The day would come when a great deal of property would fall into her hands, and it would be necessary for her to know how to manage it. Young Jerdan was coming every day to teach her something of law and of the management of estate. Music and that sort of thing might be looked after in the evening. Rebecca assented.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "that I consider you educated?"

"No, father."

"No, my little girl, but we'll put a lot of safe knowledge into this giddy little head to ballast it, eh?"

"She's wishing to have Italian," said Mrs. Morpeth.

Rebecca shot a glance at her father.

"O, indeed," said he; "but there are more important things first."

It was at that moment that Mrs. Morpeth, unable to contain herself, ventured timidly to announce that a guest might be expected in the course of a few weeks.

"Who?" asked her husband.

"Why, that young fellow we were talking about. He's so charming, and he's to be in England any way, you know."

"For what purpose is he coming here?" asked Mr. Morpeth, in a changed tone.

"Why, we invited him, that's all. What's the good of living if you're not to see your friends?"

Rebecca signed to her mother to desist.

"He's an utter stranger. What can he wish here?" asked her father, evidently trying to suppress himself.

"I'd better say, then, father, that he and I—are friends," faltered Rebecca. "I'm—engaged."

"O, indeed!" he said, turning angrily on his wife, "I knew that it would be."

"We're not an hour home and you've begun!" said Mrs. Morpeth, while Rebecca signed to her to keep quiet. "He belongs to one of the oldest Neapolitan houses."

"Our house is old, too," he said, raising his

eyebrows disdainfully, "and I shall be surprised if it has a less honourable history. But in any case, Rebecca is not going to marry a house, but a man, and I shall have to see *him*."

"Precisely. He's coming," said Mrs. Morpeth, too, emphatically.

"We saw Crispi, father," said Rebecca, willing to end the matter and change the subject, but her mother went at it again.

"I may tell you, Dick, he isn't a Catholic. He said some wonderful thing to Rebecca that it was the Protestants who had discovered conscience. Wasn't that it, Rebecca?"

"I would have expected him to say that we had invented it, rather," said the banker. "But let me see him, let me see him. Has he any arithmetic in his head?"

"Of course you will see him. He's coming here, but that's what you were objecting to a moment ago," said Mrs. Morpeth, still so emphatically as to irritate any man.

"Yes,—but I shall wish to know not merely what he is—I shall be able to say that when I see him—but I must know also what he *has*. Good God!" he exclaimed, losing control of himself at the thought of some tremendous mistake. "Will you tamper with my only child!"

"What are you going on about?" asked his wife, attempting to quiet him. "Who said she's married?"

"She's engaged?"

"You've to see him, of course."

Rebecca left the room.

"You've gone and done what I warned you against," he continued, angrily. "She's come back with a lot of nonsense in her head. She was an unformed girl when you took her away, and now she will be as obstinate as a mule. Let me tell you, I refuse to hear of this marriage, or of any other as yet. In any case, I have no faith in foreign marriages. None of us ever did such a thing before. It will be an abominable innovation. Ten chances to one if she has a family they will be neither the one thing nor the other. You can't serve two flags any more than two masters. I've seen enough of human cross breeds. They're always weak. They get two upbringings instead of one, and the one effaces the other, leaving a blank for the devil to fill. Rebecca shall never marry a foreigner, do you hear? And my bank! What sort of inheritor would a wretched Italian count be for my bank?"

"He is always talking about money," said Mrs. Morpeth.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the banker bitterly, and waved her off when she attempted to explain.

"I tell you what it is," said Mrs. Morpeth, the next time she had an opportunity, "Rebecca is determined. She loves that man, and you'll drive her out of the house into his arms."

"Let her go!" he exclaimed, savagely, finding it hard to keep from cursing them both.

From that day Rebecca grew more silent. Her father despaired of getting her to talk. She found his house dull and uninteresting, and longed to escape. She could think only of Hector, whose letters Briggs conveyed to her. She became the gossip and talk of her friends. Every one knew that she had given her heart to a foreigner, and his arrival was awaited with curiosity. Roland was quizzed right and left, and was obliged to confess that he saw very little of Rebecca. Now and again she would look in at the smoking-room door, when he or Longridge or Rufus happened to be playing a game of billiards with her father. But beyond saying "Good evening," they saw nothing of her. The multitude of her wooers seemed to give her no concern. Every one supposed that the Maddaloni must be an extraordinary man, since Rebecca had been so hard to please at home. "When is he coming?" was eagerly asked all around. Meantime Rebecca seemed to take more pleasure in young Jerdan's law lessons, than in the visits and invitations of her friends. Every day she learned something new about the rights and duties of landlords or of bondholders. Her father seemed pleased with her diligence, and began to call her his little law-clerk. He thought he was curing her of her "calf love," as he called it. "No,

no," he said, "my Becky is a sensible girl. She will not throw herself away." He thought the affair would blow over, and that he had won her back. He used to drive with her after lunch in the park, and he gave her a superb necklace, and increased her allowance for dress. He did far more for her than ever her lover could have done. She felt the pathos of it all, and her heart was about to break. It was dreadful to have to tell him that she wished to leave him, or that the magnificence with which he sought to surround her and almost bribe her was empty. She loved Maddaloni, and found enough magnificence in that. Her heart was not in the great, dark city in which her father wished her to remain, but in the far-off Siren City. She loved with the strength and intensity of an English heart, and no power on earth could beguile her back. The day was approaching when Maddaloni would arrive. And yet both she and her mother hesitated to announce it.

"Give it up, Rebecca," said Mrs. Morpeth, "it's an infatuation!"

But Rebecca only grew more and more reserved. Why, she asked, would they not leave her alone? Surely she ought to be allowed to make her own choice. As for Roland, he was a straight, splendid fellow, but she did not know him as she knew Maddaloni, with that rapid and extraordinary intimacy which love brings. Her

father was watching her, and becoming more and more resentful. If she was ever absent from the house for a long time, the wildest conjectures filled him. He suspected she wished to escape. It was hard for him to have to admit that she was mistress of her own being to do with it what she pleased, and that that was a species of property over which he had no hold. He had no words strong enough for his wife, on whom he laid more than half the blame. When his friends asked him if he had seen his future son-in-law yet, he became so hotly angry, that they knew never to speak of it again. But how could Rebecca choose otherwise? On one side were stocks and shares, and on the other was her love.

A present of wine arrived from Naples addressed to the banker. He was more irritated than pleased by the gift. And when the wine was opened, he did not hide his contempt for it. As he drank a few glasses he asked what such thin stuff was good for. At length he burst out laughing and called for his port. Rebecca, stung to the heart, left the room, and would have given anything to have been able to leave the house. Lady Babington was giving a dance that night, and it was only Rebecca's pride that made her go. She did not wish to be talked about as love lost and love-sick and pining. It was known that Roland, Longridge and Rufus were her three

special English admirers. She danced with each of them, and seemed merry. Roland asked her how she enjoyed Naples, and when the count was coming, and she replied straight out that he was coming next week. As the news passed from Longridge to Rufus, the latter said: "Oh, then, I'll not go off my chump. Decent girls can be got as easy as daisies. Decent fellows are scarcer. Oh, Rebecca! And then her governor would be such a hard old screw. By Gad, once he asked me to lend him a sovereign, for he hadn't change, and *I* hadn't five shillings in my pocket. Didn't tell him though." "By Jove," said Rufus, "that reminds me, can you lend me a sov? Dashed hard up." Longridge shrugged his shoulders, saying Roland might do it. They were watching Roland dancing with Rebecca. "By Gad," said Rufus, "he lifts her off her feet." When the dance was finished and Roland had resigned her to another, he came up to his two friends. "Lend us a sov," said Rufus. "She's awfully jolly to dance with," said Roland, handing a sovereign. "D'you know the old chap's fearfully sick with her. Because she'll not marry me," said Rufus. "No; it's because she won't have *me*," said Longridge, laughing. "By Gad," said Rufus, "I promised old Marion Waller this dance. Oh, Lor! here she comes, as thin's a broomstick."

Roland remained to watch Rebecca go around

with Longridge. "By Gad, I do love her though," he said. But the lover who has been accepted by the parent and rejected by the girl, is always in a pitiable position. And Roland was too proud to force himself into favour. But he had taken old Briggs into his confidence. It was Briggs who handed Roland's simple missives to Rebecca. Although he despaired of rivalling the rhetoric with which, doubtless, the Italian adorned his letters, yet now and again he broke into a rough doggerel poetry, which greatly amused Rebecca. She did not suppose he was half so serious as he really was. There is a certain promiscuous love which women may have for men, and which may be perfectly pure and charming. Such was the love Rebecca had for Roland. She felt his strength. She would trust him in any crisis, and would even resign to him all the timorous and fragile things of her soul, knowing that he would keep them safe. And certainly if she had taken old Briggs' advice, she would have allowed the captain to carry her off from Pont Street long before the Italian got the chance.

"But," said Briggs to Roland, "the old gentleman's darned sick with her. He's not 'appy. He wishes no stranger comin' to carry 'is daughter away. Says he, 'will my daughter marry a foreigner? No,' says he, 'never!' and he's right."

Roland asked if Rebecca was ever seen crying.

"Yes, captain," said Briggs, "that's just it. These darlin's, bless 'em, continually do cry, and it's enough to melt your 'eart. But you keep sleek, captain. It'll come all right. The foreigner will not get a warm reception 'ere. I ain't going to advise that Miss Rebecca be carried away out of the country. One day, captain, I'm sure I'll bring in the news that you're a 'ead of all the winners. Blast me if I don't."

"But how does she receive *my* letters?" asked Roland.

"Well, sir," said Briggs, "she laughs and smiles and says, 'Oh, this is poor Captain Roland.' Not to mislead you, sir—she really seems more pleased when those with the darned foreign stamps come. The worst is she ain't a confident, and says very little to Barkston. Between you and me, I don't think Barkston 'as much of a 'ead in these things, captain. When I says to Barkston, 'How's miss?' after I've given a letter with a foreign stamp or one of yours, 'Oh,' says Barkston, 'she's all right.' Barkston, sir, 'asn't skill in discoverin' the moods of people by a-watchin' their faces. Now if I'd been in Barkston's place, which God be thanked I'm not, I'm better as a man, sir," continued Briggs, drawing himself up, "but if I'd been a lady's maid, I'd get to know all their little sorrows. I would say, 'And surely Miss 'as got fine news from the Continent, to-day, being so bright,' or 'Surely, miss, something

is vexing you to-day,' and so on, sir. And then she would drop a tear or two and tell me all!"

"Mr. Morpeth blames Mrs. Morpeth for taking Miss Rebecca's side?" asked Roland.

"Yes, sir," answered Briggs. "There's no misleadin' you. My lady, I'm sorry to say, seems all for the foreigner. The other day I heard a dispute between the old gentleman and my lady. If I'd liked I could 'ave listened, since they were talkin' over loud, but upon my honour, sir, I came away."

"Good old Briggs!" said Roland, giving him a slap on the back.

"Well, captain," said Briggs, "as for listening at doors it's a great temptation for servants, especially if they're young uns. It's a fine way for 'em to become smart, to hear what the great uns talk. As for me, sir, I've never done it. But I've listened at the parlour-maid's doors to 'ear what *they've* got to say about the like of *me*. Lor, such tongues! I'm an old bow-legged, stiffy, am I, ain't fit even to carry a dust-bin steady! Lor! I can put up with it, because that sort come and go like the leaves, while *I* stop for ever. Been here for thirty years, sir."

"Tell old Barkston to keep her eye open," said Roland.

"Well, captain," said Briggs, "Barkston's a good old cautious girl. We 'ave pulled together long. She's some pride in the 'ouse like myself.

Barkston's steady, and never used to make love to every flunkey that came up to this door."

Roland was making off at these irrelevances when Briggs offered a piece of further news.

"There was a good joke the other day, captain. A pipe of wine arrived from Italy. It's the forerunner of himself, maybe, and if he tastes as sour, pah! we'll not 'ave him. 'Well,' said the governor to me, 'Briggs,' says he, 'taste that, and tell me what you think. But it's so strong, don't take much or you'll be roarin' drunk.' 'Sir,' said I, after I'd swallowed a glass to his 'ealth, 'if you'll excuse me you must be mistaken in this wine. Why,' I said, 'we used to make cowslip wine, and it was stronger.' Then the governor burst out laughing, and said, 'Briggs,' says he, 'we can tell what sort of men they will be who drink stuff like that. Bring me some whisky.' 'Yes, sir,' said I, 'it's not fit for school-misses.' Says he, 'Yes, Briggs, and when these foreigners come over here and see drunks on the street, they must think we've light heads if it's their wines that makes them light, whereas,' says he, 'it's a strong wine that sets our cool heads on fire, eh Briggs?' says he."

Roland had enough, and came away forgetting half of what Briggs had been saying. He wondered what the Maddaloni was like, and became impatient to see him, attempting to resign himself to Rebecca's choice.

CHAPTER V

THE unmarried Wallers expressed astonishment at Rebecca's indifference to men like Roland, or even to such as Rufus and Longridge. Apparently without seeking them she had numerous lovers. The more indifferent she grew the more they crowded round her. The Wallers wondered how ever the thing was done. They had been "out" so long that they never required a chaperon now, and made their appearance as regularly as the fiddles and flutes. Lord Rufus, for instance, had waltzed himself tired with Marion the eldest, but he had hardly ever paid her a compliment. If he did it was sure to be a lying one. Longridge had polkaed with Agnes until, as he had said, he knew every rib of her, but he was no more enthusiastic than Rufus. Henrietta, the youngest of them, who was now Lady Middlemass, was a different sort. Of the three daughters of Waller, the rich cotton-spinner, she possessed most of what Mrs. Morpeth called "social push." She told her sisters that she knew all about fellows, and that she could twist Sir Tom Middlemass round her fingers. The two elder sisters entered into a sort of dual league against her. Before she was married, Middlemass used

to call every evening to see her, and the two elder sisters were sure to remain in the room to talk twaddle all the evening. The only time Henrietta had a chance was when Middlemass took her out to a theatre or a dance. Her sisters were very tall and thin, like the old-fashioned vases which used to be seen among our great-grandmother's china, but Henrietta was quite modern, and had absorbed all the parental beauty that there had been to spare. She had at least a pair of eyes which were like lights that might mislead a man. Whereas her two sisters preferred science, and had even studied geology. Henrietta was no blue-stocking, and pretended to nothing but French songs and roguish books. The jealousy of the sisters had been aroused by the extensive favours Middlemass had bestowed, and when at last the marriage came they could hardly realise that Henrietta had stolen a match upon them. They were left to go on completing their education. They wondered how Middlemass could tolerate her caprices. She was never two days the same with him. The morning after their marriage she stared into his eyes and asked if he loved her, and when he said "O lor', yes!" she burst out laughing. She found him very good-natured and stupid, while he found her the most vivacious of young wives. But her vivacities and caprices drove him at last to that South Sea whaling expedition where he ran risk of

death. Meanwhile, if he wished to embrace her, she wriggled out of his arms like a young eel, and left him standing mute at her agility. Young husbands must be kept in their proper places, she said. When Marion and Agnes ventured to offer advice on the management of a husband, looking at her through their new glasses, she asked them what *they* knew about it. And then she told them that if they ever had a chance, which she very much doubted, they ought to choose men who had more of the devil of self-will in them than Tom.

"Like Roland!" tittered the sisters, who knew that Henrietta had manoeuvred for him in vain.

"Roland is all eyes for Rebecca," said Marion.

"Yes, I know," said Henrietta, gaily, "*Tant pis!* And I believe she'll want to marry him yet, though she's gone and got engaged to an Italian."

"Don't you remember at school," said Agnes, "when some Italians came to dance a tarantella, Rebecca thought them the loveliest creatures she had ever seen, and said she would marry one of them."

"Every one's waiting to see the Maddaloni," said Marion.

"Ah, well," replied Henrietta, "I always said I would be married before Becky, and so I have been, good luck to her!"

The elder sisters withdrew and took refuge in

their studies, astonished at their younger sister's success. But like every one else they were keenly interested in the storm that was gathering on Rebecca. Every one was guessing what would happen. Even in the midst of civilisation, observed the learned Wallers, certain savage methods and rites remain, and marriage by capture or by purchase is still in vogue. The son-in-law still buys his wife, or carries her off against the wishes and wills of the parents, or takes her on credit. The Wallers were shocked at the thought of Rebecca being carried off, but Henrietta assured them that this was what would happen. Mrs. Morpeth was sounded, Mr. Morpeth was sounded, even Rebecca herself had open questions put to her by those eager and impudent enough to do it. This was always the subject hesitatingly hinted at by callers at Pont Street. Every one was aware there was something to be discovered, and came away disappointed if no light had been thrown on what was passing or to come. All that was known was that the house was divided into two camps, and that while Mrs. Morpeth and Rebecca said that Maddaloni was coming, Mr. Morpeth repudiated any knowledge of it. Lady Babington, who always remained a true friend of the family, kept discreet, although she was in all the secrets. As Briggs opened the door to the numerous callers, he saw at a glance on their faces what they had come for.

In all the chattering, only Rebecca was silent. Lady Middlemass advised her sisters to scan her eyelids very closely, and they would probably discover signs of weeping over night. But Rebecca, although she was passing through a disagreeable time, generally preserved her self-possession in the presence of her friends. What every one felt to be awkward was that since the engagement had not been formally announced, it was impossible to offer congratulations. Once, indeed, old Jerdan, looking keenly at his friend, consoled him on the loss of his daughter.

"Never heard of it yet," said the banker.
"Have you, Jerdy?"

"Oh," said Jerdan, "those girls do worry our grey hairs."

"Well, Jerdy," said Morpeth, "I'm decided on one thing. Becky shall never marry a foreigner, that's all!"

CHAPTER VI

BUT although her father might heap ridicule upon her, she would remain undismayed. In Maddaloni's devotion to the old walls which had sheltered his ancestors, something of feudalism seemed to linger, and she found in him the same spirit of conservatism in which she too had been brought up. And since all love is a sort of moral feudalism in which great passions are to be given in fee, Rebecca felt the joy of surrender. And she longed to set sail with him for the mysterious city, hot hearth of passion, where the fire of its own soil seemed to have entered into the veins of its people, and to have made their love furious. She knew, of course, all the opposition that was being prepared against her. She was already divided from her father. It was now impossible for the one to understand the other, and yet it was only Rebecca who had changed. She was already divided from him, not merely by the vast spaces of human experience which separate ingenuous youth from the caution and craft of age, but divided also by all the difference which lies between a northern and a southern ideal. For the moment, in the flood of her feeling, Rebecca had forgotten half the stern teaching about

life which she had imbibed. Maddaloni could rest assured that she would give herself to him completely, and love him to the very core of his sad heart. It was his fortune that she had seen him at the right moment, when the forces of her own nature were urging her to break away from the arbitrariness of her father's rule. All the fanaticism of love was here. Usually we discover earlier than other European peoples the extraordinarily sharp line which divides illusion and reality. It is only because love has its seat in both, and transforms illusion into reality and reality into illusion that we find it so hard to discover the limits. Never was a lover, northern or southern, who did not mix them up. It was Rebecca's fortune or misfortune that at the very moment when youth declares that only the emotions are real, that they are the heart and the real brain and the real will of man, she met a southerner to whom the truth was not, as it should be, only partial and one-sided, but permanent and fixed. This naïve and pathetic belief of our youth, if unchecked, will play mischief with us for ever. Against the wisdom of her father, Rebecca could set only the ineffectual rage of youthful desires. The distance and the delay helped her to exaggerate the qualities of her lover, and make him out far greater and better than he was. Her vision of him was so intense that his personal presence could hardly be

intenser. If she had had a sister or a brother, things would have been easier for her. But she had no one to confide in. Overcome by the stronger will of her husband, her mother could promise her only tacit sympathy. She assured Mr. Morpeth that it would be safer to allow Madaloni to come to the house, because then Rebecca would see how unadvisable her marriage was, and she warned him that if he became violent in his opposition he would only drive his daughter out of the house. But he was indifferent to her advice, and told her to cease meddling. As he sat silent every night in his armchair, casting now and again a rapid glance at his daughter if she happened to be in the room, his predominant thought was one of irritation and disgust. It seemed unreasonable that he had condemned the stranger, even before he had so much as seen him. But he could hardly help looking with a certain suspicion on the first comer for her hand, and since the first comer happened to be a foreigner his doubts were doubled. He was not even sure of Frank Roland, much less of an untried man. One thought troubled him, and that was the disagreeable fact that, after all, Rebecca could do what she liked with herself. He admired the old Roman law, which made a father the sovereign of his children even long after they had grown to manhood and womanhood. Far from such a measure being harsh, it was the best

of all legal blessings because it meant that age and experience should protect those who knew nothing of the world or whose knowledge of it was limited. "What," he asked in a moment both of tenderness and of rage, "what does the child know of the world? How many blasted ruffians out there may have seen her, and mean to kidnap her? I have heard of their cursed camorra. Good God! how am I to know what they will do with her! Naples! The very cockpit of the world's iniquity against God and man! What do *I* care for a count, or a duke, or a king, if he is a scoundrel?"

He watched her as she grew pale before his fury, and sat silent and pale at meals. Her very kisses at night and in the morning were becoming formal and cold. He had lost her, and he tried every conceivable means of recovering her, now by rage, now by tenderness. He had seen the ring, and with an angry exclamation had forbidden her to wear it or even keep it.

"Father!" she said, losing control of herself for the first time, "I admit the only thing worth keeping is your temper."

"Ho, ho, oh, oh!" he exclaimed in an ironical passion. "Where have *you* learned impudence?"

But she went away broken-hearted, and said to her mother that she would tell Hector not to come to the house.

"Shall I have him insulted here?" she said,

weeping till she became inconsolable. Mrs. Morpeth attempted to reconcile them, but found it hard, and had to content herself in a woman's way by exclaiming periodically, "What a pity we ever saw Naples!"

Meantime Barkston and Briggs expected the dissolution of the family.

"My lady, I'm sure," said Barkston, "'asn't told 'im the day it's to be, but she told me he's comin' Tuesday of next week. And as for miss, she's not been ridin' for weeks. It's just pitiful to see 'er. Lord, when Moloney ——"

"Maddaloni," corrected Briggs. "I've heard the name spelt."

"Well, then," continued Barkston, "he that's the cause of it all, when he's come, he'll not know miss. She's cried her eyes out."

"Miss Rebecca," replied Briggs, "is both love-sick and law sick. These worryin' law lessons! What could she do but cry! Does she never say anythin' about 'erself?"

"No," says Barkston, "when I've done 'er hair in the mornin' I expect 'er to drop a word, but never. *I* was like that too."

"Missis Barkston," says Briggs, "some people can flip a secret from the 'eart that 'olds it like a crumb off a table."

"Mr. Briggs," replied Barkston, "you don't know nothin' about it. When a sensitive miss is sufferin' worries and aches and sits cryin', I'm

too much a lydy not to know how to treat her."

"Yes, Missis Barkston," says Briggs, "I know you're a lydy, but you ain't 'alf sly, you know. You could say quite delicate, 'Lor', miss, and what can it be!' or, 'Bless you, sweetheart, what's this?' and straight she'd weep it all out to you. Does she say nothin' about Captain Roland?"

"No," said Barkston, "and what's more, miss is so proud that she never says anythin' to my lady neither. Don't I know it too. I was took that way when the Corporal was killed, and sat cryin' and sayin' that my brave Barkston wouldn't come to me any more. And I never asked a crumb of comfort from my betters or my inferiors either."

"Yes, Missis Barkston," said Briggs, eyeing the fresh-cheeked housekeeper. "Yes, ma'am, Barkston was a brave man, but Briggs——"

"I have you now!" said Barkston, flicking him with her towel till he had to take refuge in his own pantry.

In saying that Rebecca gave confidences to no one, Mrs. Barkston was correct, but as the time for final decision grew near, and as the relations between her and her father grew still more strained, she felt a great need of disclosure. It was curious that the only one to whom she felt inclined to turn was Francis Roland. She was

really unaware at this time that he loved her as closely as he did afterward, when things became infinitely more complex than they were at this stage. Roland was one of those men who knew little about women. He knew nothing, indeed, of the ordinary methods of claiming their attention. Their caprices irritated him. He did not even suppose that his big manly figure had any attractions for them, or that the surest way of bringing them to his feet was to treat them with the shy reserve and hesitating advance and apparent indifference which were natural to him. For instance, he would have walked three miles to get out of the sight of Lady Middlemass. He had never been brought up to know girls, but that is precisely the sort of man whom women like to meet. Instinctively they pick out the man whose slight awkwardness of manner toward them betrays his virginity and his ignorance of those ordinary ruses which those long practised in handling their affections generally adopt. There is such a delicious surprise in conquering the man whom no one else has conquered. And Roland, who knew nothing of the banal tricks which, while they demand them, women also despise, was rather like a great fresh boy than a man of the world. His grey eyes kindled up very rarely. Indeed, Dawkins the private, who was his servant in the Guards, used to say that the captain seemed excited only now and again,

when he gave him letters to carry to Pont Street. But these letters contained only the mildest and most harmless comment on Rebecca's attractions, and were generally only invitations to go to a theatre or a concert. Doubtless he would have begun to declare himself more openly after she had come home had he not known that a stranger had been before him. His character, made up half of taciturn strength and half of tenderness, arrested him in the very beginnings of his affection, and he stood dumb and not even expectant, like a far-off lover. He knew, of course, that he was a favourite with her father, but he was too proud to make use of any such expedient to compel Rebecca to love him. Had his love for her flamed like a common passion doubtless it would have turned into jealousy or hate as soon as it had received a check. But it really grew and strengthened in its reverse, and became an admiration mixed with a sort of awe. As soon as he would become aware of Rebecca's terrible suffering he would be the first to help her, irrespective of what the issue might mean for himself. His simple monologue, "By Gad, I love her!" was better than any rhetoric. And the fact that Rebecca, unaware of the real depth of his feeling, came to him for advice, indicated the mysterious truth that the goodness of a character may be felt apart from words or deeds.

"Frank," she said, "it's so strange that al-

though you're a fellow, you're the only one I can confide in. D'you know I'm miserable, and I don't know what it'll come to. You've heard about Count Maddaloni . . . well, he's coming in a day or two, and father's raging. I know every one is talking about me. I never knew such cruelty or absurdity. They say I've done wrong in getting engaged to him even before they've seen him."

For the first time Roland felt, as he would have said, queer. Her naïve destruction of all his hopes sounded impossible and unreal. Not then so much as even a grain of love's great plenty within him was needed or desired. He had been living in the mock sunlight which always shines on the rejected lover. But when he looked again at Rebecca he forgot *himself* and told her to cheer up like a good girl. "It'll come—right, Rebecca," he said. "As soon as—as your father sees him, you know."

"Frank," she said, "wouldn't you stick to the end, to the person you loved, no matter what came over you both?"

"Of course," said Roland. "What other way is there?"

She asked him like a good chap to take Maddaloni about.

"Why, yes," he said. "I'll have him at our mess, and I'll take him to the club."

She said again he was the only one she could

trust, while he on his way back to Sloane Street said to himself, "What could I have expected? I never asked her to love me. It's—oh, it's—oh, it's awful."

Meanwhile, her father, fearing her obstinacy, was as perplexed as Roland. His affection for her was threatening to undermine his arrogant and omnipotent will, which usually crushed everything under it.

His business success had been the result of persistent and uncompromising hostility to all half measures, and he had always used toward Rebecca the very methods which had helped him to amass and conserve the fortune he was going to bequeath to her. But he was tormented by the fear that Rebecca intended to marry whom she pleased. From his point of view it was an outrage on his parental control. The feeling of property and ownership had permeated him so thoroughly that he commanded from her complete submission, since only *he* knew how to take care of her. If he looked after the wants of her daily life, how much more ought he to be consulted on so momentous a question as her marriage? In the case of a son the way would have been clear. He would have threatened to cut him off with the one-fifteenth of his estate which law required. But with a woman it was different. Her helplessness and her ignorance of the world appealed for pity and a larger for-

bearance. Whereas, a son, cowed by the thought of degradation and ruin, might have submitted in the end, the wary banker knew that the fanaticism of love is more genuine in a woman than in a man, and drives her to more extraordinary feats of sacrifice. It was with an indescribable irritation that he began to think that the very strictness in which Rebecca had been brought up would strengthen her devotion to objects she thought right. Not for nothing had she been taught that although she spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, and had not charity, she would be but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It was dreadful for the imperious old Englishman to find the daughter of all his hopes, applying to an affair which filled him with anxiety and distrust, the very principles of goodness in which she had been brought up. Besides, it was extremely improbable that even although Rebecca had positively known that Hector did not possess all that she thought he possessed, she would have treated him otherwise than with the idolatry of a first affection. How could she believe in the doubts which her father, who had never seen him, was throwing upon him?

But even *he* began to see in what state of mind she was, and thought how best he could help her out of what he said was only, after all, a one-horned dilemma. What he could not brook was

the finality of her choice. Unexpectedly, however, he gave his consent almost at the last moment that Hector should come to the house, although he expected very little pleasure from his visit. And indeed, a first look of him was enough. Rebecca hoped that as soon as she presented her lover to her father his prejudices against him as a foreigner would disappear, but in this she was mistaken. It was unlucky that owing to the lateness of the train which brought Hector to Victoria the dinner had to be delayed. Before he had dressed it was long past eight o'clock, and Briggs was getting nervous.

"This," he said to Barkston, "is no 'appy beginning, and the guv'nor won't take to 'im if he ain't punctual."

In fact the "guv'nor" was sitting "fuming" in the library as Mrs. Morpeth told Rebecca, and was just about to ring for Briggs when the door opened and Rebecca came in with Hector. The meeting of the lovers had been very joyful. Her father noticed the difference in her demeanour at once; her step was lighter, and a few moments had apparently brought back the colour to her face. He watched it all as a bad sign. But at first his impression of the stranger was not wholly unfavourable. Hector, who was graceful and nimble, moved quickly up to him to shake hands, and it was only when Mr. Morpeth saw his eyes that he felt as if all his prejudices were

well furnished. The eyes had no shining or suspicious in their look. The eyebrows dark, but were rather far apart, and, descending, were not even the suggestion of a woman's hair. First of a sort they had, but it was somewhat fine, quick, darting and easily subdued. His dark suit and dark hair did not suggest Mr. Mervell, whose traits of physiognomy were peculiar, and the mood, which was like a woman's rather than a man's, betrayed the world of morality and imagination in which his owner habitually lived. The lips were without grossness: indeed, they were too thin, but they were not firm as the corners. He was evidently a man who had taken in the course of his life few resolutions. In the rapid momentary survey and summary which this dealer in men took of him, all sorts of instinctive and unexpressed condemnations were passed, and Hector was forthwith judged as an adventurer. Rebecca was looking anxiously at her father all the time, but by the play of his eyes guessed, with a sinking heart, the gist of his opinion. In the sober light of an English home Hector looked perhaps a little odd, and he was evidently embarrassed. Yet the banker welcomed him with a good grace, and when the commonplaces of introduction were over, invited him impatiently to dinner. But in a few days Rebecca would know definitely that her father considered this amiable stranger the last

person in the world fit to be his son-in-law. And he meant to lose no time in saying it, for Rebecca's sake and his own, and for the stranger's. Indeed Rebecca saw already that her father was treating him as a passing guest and formal acquaintance, who had no great claims on the family's attention. When he asked her if she knew when Mr. Maddaloni was going to leave, she felt that the crisis of her life was very near. Hector's imperfect English increased the boredom of his visit. Mr. Morpeth could speak French only very slowly and with great difficulty, and invariably took refuge in his own English. But the explanations, counter explanations and misunderstandings which were occasioned by Hector's attempt to speak English and Mr. Morpeth's to speak French produced visible irritation and fatigue in the fastidious banker. Indeed, there was very little to talk about. Mr. Morpeth was sick of Rebecca's endless questions about Naples and the Neapolitans, and when that subject was broached generally left the room. The stranger had no genuine interest in European politics, and Mr. Morpeth found him empty. But he wished the visit to be brought to a close as amicably as possible. The day after Hector's arrival Mrs. Morpeth held a reception at which, among others, were Lady Babington, Mrs. Cayley, the unmarried Wallers and Lady Middlemass. Henrietta examined the

Maddaloni with the critical eye of a young married woman who in a few months has made more discoveries about the male than ever suggested themselves during the whole course of her wooing. She was glad that Sir Tom had the good sense to let her go about a good deal alone, and when her friends asked her where he was, she said he was interested only in whales, and was fitting up an expedition. Roland happened to be in the room, and she was anxious to see him presented to the stranger. Roland, who was very much taller, seemed to lift him off his feet like a tin soldier, as Lady Middlemass said, when they shook hands. But if Roland was suffering any chagrins they were not visible, and he passed smiling from one to another, coming up to Lady Middlemass herself, who thought he had never smiled so sweetly before. She asked him what he thought of the Italian, and he shrugged his shoulders, saying that he seemed not a bad sort. "How jealous you men are of each other!" she said. "Don't you see we all think him very handsome, as he should be, being Rebecca's choice. Lots of women choose men as they choose ribbons and flowers, you know, but there being only two shades, light and dark, that's why we seldom go wrong!" It was all a question of taste, and Rebecca had chosen well. Lady Middlemass watched Roland closely. It was evident that he was not jealous of Madda-

loni's appearance. He did not require to be. There was no one in the room so heartily anxious for Rebecca's marriage as Lady Middlemass. She knew better than any one in the room that Roland loved Rebecca. If her stupid Tom could only learn to look at her with the admiration mixed with self-dependence which Roland displayed whenever his eyes turned toward Rebecca! But no; Tom simply stared up like a blinking lap-dog ready for a scolding.

It was only Henrietta, however, who felt sure of Rebecca's marriage. The precise difficulty of every one in the room was that there had been no formal announcement of it. Mr. Morpeth's absence was remarked as a bad sign, and it was known that he had given a frigid welcome. Yet Maddaloni had all the air of an accepted and happy lover. The whole atmosphere of a room becomes changed when two lovers enter it, said Mrs. Cayley to Lady Middlemass. Lady Babington whispered to Mrs. Morpeth that he was a fine-looking fellow. Mrs. Bayley, with a more critical eye, thought his legs were too thin, like a jockey's while the unmarried Wallers admired Rebecca's exotic taste. In their opinion Englishmen were the most heartless brutes in the world. Hector was evidently shy in his new surroundings, and his broken English embarrassed him.

"But," said Mrs. Cayley, "what's the good of expecting him to talk about other things when

there's so much else he's got to feel and think about. A lover is always like a somnambulist to other people, and that's just as it should be."

Mrs. Morpeth confessed to Mrs. Cayley and Lady Babington that she did not know what would come out of it. They asked her how her husband had received him, and she said well enough, but that his consent had never been given.

"Rebecca," whispered Lady Middlemass to Mrs. Cayley, "is just at the most delicious point. Her heart and mind are married to him long ago. And her papa's rage makes it all the sweeter. I wish my papa had been alive to scold me and Tom!"

"I do believe," said Mrs. Cayley, "that it'll be a runaway match."

"O, how delicious!" said Henrietta. "I wish mine had been."

"Well," said Mrs. Cayley, "a runaway match is always possible and sometimes easier after marriage than before it."

"But Rebecca hasn't the courage," said Henrietta. "She'll give in. Her papa's a tyrant. She'll give in, and be forgiven."

"I'm not so sure," said Mrs. Cayley. "They're desperately in love. Look at them! I don't care much for these Italians. Rebecca will find in the end that he will not understand her, and

she will not understand him. Her father is right. It's all very well when they're in love. Isn't she lovely!"

In ignorance of the true state of affairs Hector began to feel himself more or less at home, and was gradually losing his shyness. Mr. Morpeth, whose resentment at his presence daily increased, decided to bring the matter to an end as soon as possible. But obeying unconsciously his instincts of prudence he wrote off to Vacca asking if he knew anything about a countryman of his, a certain Count di Rosi di Maddaloni. Was he substantial? What was the amount of his property, and so on? What was his reputation? "Oh," said Vacca, with his eyes twinkling as he showed the letter to Tizio in the little office in far off Naples, "these English! Here's the letter I told you would come, asking whether Maddaloni is 'substantial!' I knew it! Such an old banking fox. Now I shall not be surprised if he takes other means of finding out. Every one knows Maddaloni to be rotten. We must be careful. Look you, Tiz, the match is afoot. She is coming to our old rotten, pagan town. Yes, yes, he *is* substantial. He comes of a good family, lives in the Palace Maddaloni, my God! And the future is so near the present, Tiz, that we can mix the tenses and turn 'shall be' into 'is,' because as the heir of old foxy surely Maddaloni *is* most substantial already. Write, Tiz, write."

"Ah," said Tizio, with the white smile on his face, "she is coming!"

Mr. Morpeth told his wife that while this stranger might do well enough for southern life he would never do well in England.

"Rebecca shall not leave England!" he said, emphatically. The thought of the installation of this foreigner in the family seemed so preposterous that the banker broke out in ridicule of his pretensions even before his face. But Rebecca, seeing everything, silently determined to make the sacrifice which love was calling her to make. She was indeed slightly surprised at the look of bewilderment which passed across Hector's face when she mentioned to him the possibility of a rupture with her father. It meant that he was pathetically ignorant of her father's ill-will. And yet he had begun to see that there was something wrong, although he was hardly prepared to face the consequences which Rebecca foresaw and invited. Once or twice he became painfully conscious that the banker was merely tolerating him. His pride of birth resented such treatment. He felt cowed before their wealth, and the thought of his own poverty tore his heart. He was astonished at the lavish manner in which the house in Pont Street was carried on, and he wondered what sort of impression the empty old Palace Maddaloni would make on Rebecca if they got married. The present of

jewellery he had brought seemed wretched compared with what he saw Mrs. Morpeth and Rebecca wearing. And a hundred small events every day made it clear to the sharp eyes of Rebecca's father that this youth was in a condition which dangerously resembled impecuniosity. When he questioned him as to what banks he dealt with, he gave unsteady and faltering replies. Things looked black. The perpetual excuse of having no change when in an emergency an obligation in the matter of small coin was asked, began to rouse suspicion. The banker became convinced that his first pronouncement on him as a penniless count and adventurer was correct. His pretensions to know all about art irritated a man whose instincts and interests were of a purely practical kind. He had contempt for a fellow who had never turned a penny by his wits, and suspected that it was because he had no wits at all. "Why," he said, "you are a count, yes. You say you come of a noble family. Precisely. But the sons of our best families serve the State, enter the diplomatic service, go into the army (he was thinking of Roland), and so on."

Hector said he too had been in Parliament, but had resigned. He began to fear the glance of the old banker's eyes. He felt cowed in his presence, and resented his advice. Once, however, when they were playing billiards after dinner,

he ventured, stumbling in English, to address Mr. Morpeth as "papa."

Mr. Morpeth laid down his cue, and looked over his glasses at him.

"What?" he asked.

"I vas saying dat dis is a very good cue, papa."

"Bless you," said Mr. Morpeth, "I'm not your papa."

"No," said Maddaloni, smiling; "but zoo is goino to be."

"Oh, am I!" exclaimed Mr. Morpeth.

"Yes," said Maddaloni, not catching the tone of Mr. Morpeth's irony, "ven Rebecca and I am married."

"Now, look you here, young man," said Mr. Morpeth, laying down his cue, and coming close up to him. "I may tell you at once that if you suppose that I shall ever permit anything of the kind you are vastly mistaken. I am perfectly willing that you should remain on as our guest in this house for a short time. I believe you behaved very kindly to my wife and my daughter in Naples, but I would only mislead you if I allowed you to suppose that anything serious will come out of this. If my wife and daughter have already misled you into believing that my consent would ever be given, it is all the more reason that I should now tell you frankly that it is not true."

This mass of words, spoken with gathering

emphasis, almost stunned Maddaloni, who, though unable to follow every syllable, was painfully aware of the general import, and saw by Mr. Morpeth's face and manner what it all meant.

"Vat did you say, sir, please? Am I mistaken? I love your daughter, and she loves me."

"Does she?"

"Yes."

"What is your religion, sir?" asked the banker.

Hector, bewildered, did not answer for some time, during which Mr. Morpeth, in a great state of irritation, repeated the question in French.

"Votre religion?"

Hector shrugged his shoulders, evidently implying that he had none, but when he saw the effect it produced, said he was, or used to be, a Catholic.

"Shall I give my daughter to a man who hesitates on such a question as this?" demanded the banker. "If you were a Catholic, for what reason did you change, sir? But if you still are one, it is all the worse for you."

"Why, sir?"

"Because it means the destruction of the human will. *We* saw that long ago. You have heard of John Wyclif? He defined better than any man the vice of your Church. 'They made property of ghostly goods,' he says, 'where property may not be, and professed to have no property in worldly goods, which are the only lawful.' I may tell you *we* are Protestants, that's all."

Hector, slightly overcome, betrayed his emotion, and then said he did not quite understand what this was all about.

"It's about my daughter, you see," said the banker, "those foolish girls only lead young men astray. Can I do anything for you? I could give you an introduction at the Italian Embassy here. Go and work, young man, and forget women."

"Business!" exclaimed Maddaloni in scorn. "I have none. Did Rebecca not say I was a count?"

"Are you? Might I ask where is your property?"

"Why, in Naples, sir."

"I have heard about properties in Naples. What is yours like?"

"It's been in de family for generations, Signor Morpeth."

"Diseases also remain in families for generations. Doubtless your property is encumbered with debt as with a disease?"

At that moment Rebecca came in, attracted by their voices.

"Rebecca," said her father, "the young man understands everything now."

"Rebecca!" exclaimed Hector, "what—is it?"

"Father," said Rebecca, bursting into tears, "it's cowardly."

In the confusion of tongues which followed, Rebecca said they would go away.

"Go if you dare!" exclaimed her father, casting a look half of reproach and half of appeal.

He went up to her, and took her by the hand. In the full light cast by the billiard lamps he saw the tears struggling in her eyes.

"Becky!" he said, "if you do this thing!"

She left the room without saying a word. Hector said good-bye to the banker, and followed her. He whispered to her that he would leave, and asked her why she had let him come in ignorance of her father's hostility.

"I am ready to go with you," said Rebecca.

"We shall go away. We shall get married here in England to-morrow morning, and go away. Are you ready? To-night when they are all in bed?"

Maddaloni hesitated.

"Why Hector?" she asked.

"For you, dear Rebecca."

"For me! How can we live apart from each other now? Let us go. Everything will be hollow for us until we are together. No harm can come to us if we love each other," she pleaded and implored, kissing him in her idolatry.

"No; no evil can come!" he said, borrowing her strength and mimicking it for the moment.

"An elopement! I hate the name," said she.

"I was brought up to hate such things. But it

will not be an elopement. I was brought up to be true. Dear Hector, I shall be true to you. How can you go without me, Hector; how can I stay?"

"How? No, it's impossible, dear Rebecca," he replied. "I couldn't."

"To-night, then, or very early in the morning? What harm could come over us? Pack up secretly. We shall meet in the grey of the day," she said, accepting hopes and dreams which promised to alter facts for her.

"I never felt your lips so warm, Rebecca," he said. "I love you!"

The day before the reply came from Vacca that Maddaloni was "a substantial person," she had fled with him. On the night of her escape, indeed, her father had decided not to sleep. He had told Maddaloni that he need not leave that night, but next day, when they would part as friends. Rebecca's silence had looked like submission. Yet the opening or shutting of a door became for him the signal of suspicion and alarm. In his bedroom he told his wife what had occurred. "Rebecca," he said, "has too much good sense. She will not throw herself away on a man like that." But as the very words were being said, she was preparing her hurried flight. Mrs. Morpeth seemed thankful that the episode could be considered as over, and toward morning she and her husband fell asleep. About three

o'clock Hector and Rebecca met in the hall. But their undertaking was almost frustrated by an incident similar to what happened when Mr. and Mrs. Browning escaped. Mr. Morpeth's dog began to bark at the sound of footsteps at so unusual an hour. The house was perfectly still, and the barking seemed all the louder. Rebecca in terror called the dog to her, and he came wagging his tail and looking up inquiringly. "Hunter," she said, patting him and leaving him, "be still!" The dog was apparently contented, and lay down watching their preparations. Maddaloni, pale with excitement and sleeplessness, gave her a hurried kiss. They opened the door and gathered their traps on the steps, and then Maddaloni went to find a cab. As Rebecca waited in the chill morning air, did she wonder when next she would visit the old house? There was no one stirring in Pont Street. Standing there half bold, half timorous, she was the personation and guise of love turned fugitive. The grey morning was breaking over the stern, vast city, immeasurable, impassive, wall upon wall. The dog came sniffing round her again, as if wishing to know if she was going to take him for a run. There were tears in her eyes,—how often have I looked into the eyes of passion and seen tears!—tears, because of her turmoil, and because there is nothing so dolourous and wonderful in the long list of our disillusions as an affection

that refuses to be mortified. Did her runaway heart know really the future as it thought it did? The peculiar irony of it was that she who was at heart an ingenuous girl and would remain one, was standing on her father's doorstep like a guilty thing seeking to escape, carried away by an irresistible affection. Love had come upon her to vex her with all his storms! But it was dreadful to leave such a home. Ah, it is strange, life's invariable, insatiable demand for sacrifice, so that even our intensest and long-sought pleasures are turned, in our despite, into altars upon which our very hearts are to be burnt like burnt-offerings. Not for nothing did the preacher say, *And I gave my heart to know madness and folly. I perceived also that this is vexation of spirit.* Night after night would have to pass before her father would cease to rise in his sleep, calling out her name in the affliction and consternation of his dreams. For it was too hard for a man like him to accept the mysterious law that a child must leave father and mother, and cleave unto a stranger. The days would seem longer to Roland. But doubtless meantime for her love's cross was gay.

BOOK II
HER NUPTIAL HEART

CHAPTER I

THIS is an amazing resurrection which takes place within us at the signal and last trump of love, when the dead in us is raised, and the spirits and ghosts of our fears are shaken as from their tombs within us, and leave us, as it seems, for ever. O brightness, O freedom in his rays and dawns! Rebecca felt that the great work of love, which casts out fear, was before her. For it is love's way to go on discovering for ever, closer and more intimate relations. Never was a lover who did not believe that the limitless had become suddenly his. After they were married and had hurried away, Rebecca believed it. Surely love is at least as deep and inexhaustible as a sea. It is as if one well goes deepening into another until there is a great deep! But in that keen search of hearts which takes place when two have found each other, love sometimes goes veiled, unwilling to see what may be there, unwilling also to believe that the limits can ever be reached and that there is no treasure still lying hidden. Thus Rebecca had that feeling of vastness, also that feeling of despair, which overtakes an explorer when he sees before him a great untravelled tract to which many ways lead. One way

may be better than another, and which should he choose? In its beginnings love always appears myriad-souled. But woe to the lovers if, as, one by one, the reciprocal secrets are unfolded, each begins to ask, "Is this all? Is this all?" Rebecca began "counting the ways" she loved him, and in that naïve arithmetic added up a vast sum. She found her love for him in every channel of his being. Only, would it not be terrible if, in her idealising haste, she had seen what was really not there, and if afterwards she would have to go on subtracting from him one by one the qualities she had given him? It is an astonishing idolatry which sets itself up within us as soon as we discover an object of our love. What is it which makes us in that state so utterly blind and so obstinately generous, lavishing idolatry on a character which in the cold light that comes after may appear trivial or even repulsive? If we could find it, we would find one of the keys to our being. Not only Rebecca but every creature that has ever loved has practised this noble untruth and idealism. And who can help himself when, as in those moments, the soul is woven through and through with delight? If Rebecca's discovery had come in a single shock it would have been more merciful. It came neither very early nor very late, but in degrees, and in progressive momentousness until she was loaded with it as by a chain. Certainly many months would

have to pass before she would be heard confessing, "I expected something different!" And yet she was already feeling the truth though she was not facing it. For with that inner knowledge which comes from so close a union as marriage is, there came also a heart-breaking fear that Hector's ambitions had greater hold of him than his love, and overtopped it. His love was intermittent; a side issue, an excuse for other and deadly privileges. Rebecca had heard that love was stronger than death, but it was monstrous to have to deny that it ought to be stronger than money! When after having hesitated a hundred times, Maddaloni asked her for money, and she said, a little surprised, that she had only fifty English pounds, the look of anger and disgust which crossed his face filled her with consternation.

For slightly over a month it had been "roses, roses all the way." In the joyousness of her new life her father's anger had been forgotten. No letter had come from home, and although it was bitter to think that now she was as nothing to them, her new affection more than made up for the loss. The October rains had not yet fallen, and Naples was enjoying an autumn which seemed rather like a retarded spring. Carnations were still blowing, and the flower-sellers were crying them in the streets. The city which sits in a great light, covering itself with light as with

a garment, had never looked lovelier, for the vineyards were pouring their riches into it, and the vine-gatherers' autumn song was in the fields. Rebecca could hardly realise that she had been here only little more than two months ago.

It was still very warm. The sun was still using the sea like a vast burning-glass. Hector took her to the vineyards of Posilipo where the grapes which in June had been only as large as peas were now gleaming red, roofing the fields. The vine-gatherers were going laden with the precious fruit in baskets on their heads, and singing snatches of old Bacchic poetry and lore which the Greeks had brought with them when they too wrought the gorgeous soil of Italy, and planted cool vine roots. Sometimes raised high above the vineyard might be seen a lonely crucifix, signal and promise of blessing and fertility, with feet and side stained crimson with the symbol of a redder vintage. And rising out of the red earth, red, but also yellow with the yellowing maize under the vines, it seemed to dominate like a strange fixed ghost of tragedy the pagan splendour of those fields. In some places, into which modern mechanism had not penetrated, the wine press was being trodden, and the vine girls' and the vine lads' legs and knees might be seen red in the wine fat. Far off, lost in the azure, lay the wondrous isles, foam-fringed by the sea, and sending up, they too, their song

of the purple grape. To Rebecca it was a revelation of fresh beauty, but as yet only an accessory and accompaniment to the deeper happiness which was still undisturbed within her.

A general surprise had been caused among those who knew her by her sudden return with Maddaloni. Every one remembered her, and counted the few weeks that had passed since she had danced at the palace. The precise circumstances of the marriage were not yet whispered abroad, and Hector and she had been actually some days in Naples before Vacca and Tizio knew. The old housekeeper who kept the palace expressed astonishment that a bride should have come home so empty-handed. Hector forbade her to let any one know that they had arrived, and he used to look through the sun blinds to see if Tizio might be passing in the street. The first few days were passed in seclusion.

But one morning Vacca heard a rumour of their arrival, and he came up to find out the truth. Tizio, who was with him, had said that when he passed down in the morning all the shutters were closed, but now they were open. Breathlessly they both came up the great unwashed staircase, Vacca sweating with excitement, and Tizio pale as usual, and with "his thoughts all in ice." Maddaloni heard their voices at the door, and ran out to meet them, but Vacca had already entered impatiently, and

was stumbling over the few travelling boxes which had not yet been removed. Rebecca, who was in the great red bed-chamber, recognised their voices, and a shudder passed over her. She had forgotten Vacca and Tizio, and now that she heard them she felt a horror taking hold of her. She had even forgotten that Vacca was her father's agent. She could scarcely say why they were the last men she wished to meet.

"Eh, Maddaloni, back again already, and with the bride!" Vacca was exclaiming as loudly as his asthma permitted.

He was shaking both of Maddaloni's hands in congratulations, while Tizio stood behind, grinning over Vacca's head.

"Yes, yes," said Hector. "We are married. It was so sudden."

"Ah, ha," exclaimed Vacca, turning to Tizio, "he has conquered. Let us salute the bride."

Hector took them into the ballroom, which was now empty except for a few chairs. The shutters were open, and the sun was full on the mirrors. He told them to wait till he called his wife.

"Ha," said the old usurer, going up to one of the mirrors to twist his moustache, "it was on this floor she danced her heart away. I have prophesied well. 'Tis the first English girl that has slept on the great birth-bed of the Maddaloni."

Tizio, saying nothing, looked round at the

empty hall. Meanwhile Hector was trying to persuade Rebecca to go to them, but she refused, saying she was tired. He insisted, however, and when she became more stubborn in her refusal he ordered her to receive them in the bedroom.

"Never, Hector," said Rebecca; "we do not do so in England."

"What does it matter?" he asked. "You must do it."

"I'll go to see them, rather, then," said Rebecca; "but you might have made some excuse for me. You know I hate that Tizio."

"But Vacca is agent to your horrible father, and may help to reconcile you."

"My father is not horrible, Hector."

"Not horrible? ho, ho, you love him, do you? Will he give you money, then? Not horrible! He is a devil, and I believe your mother is a devil."

"Hector!" exclaimed Rebecca, "what is this? What does it mean? You will soon be using that fearful language also to me."

"Yes, yes. You are a devil too! You have no money, a poor devil! You cheated me into loving and marrying you."

She could hardly believe her ears, and sank back on the great bed, which was covered by a faded crimson satin counterpane, in a kind of stupor, until the tears fell rapidly from her eyes.

"They are waiting," he said, impatiently, while

a scowl passed over his dark face, "they have demanded to see you, and you must come. They are of the camorra! We must obey. They will kill me because you have no money."

She remained motionless in the bed except for the irregular heaving of her bosom.

"See, see it will be all right," said her husband, suddenly. "Rise, Rebecca. I beg your pardon. —It will be all right. Vacca, the great camorrista, will conciliate your father. Come, he can do these things."

She rose, thankful to catch the sound of his voice, which had become more tender, and eager to believe that she had surely misunderstood what he had said. He hurriedly dried her tears, and lifted her up, and kissed her. But had she at last discovered what had been haunting her ever since their marriage? Was this the explanation of that hesitancy which overtook him just as they were on the point of being united? However bitterly she had deplored her father's alienation from her, she had never allowed it to weaken her affection for Hector or to cause her to abandon him through fear of being disinherited. Her disinheritance had come, but it made no change in her love. Yet it was only a feeling of shame combined with a hope of ultimate advantage, combined also, no doubt, with his delight in her beauty which had made him submit to the formal ceremony. Rebecca possessed the "marriage

lines," but they were nothing but a mockery if his motives had been base. During the voyage out, which had occupied nine days, she had often banished a cruel suspicion which had begun to mix itself up with all her thoughts concerning him. His conversations used often to turn to the subject of money, and he asked her to what extent she was independent, and if her mother had made any provision for her. She replied that she knew nothing, but that since she had married without her father's consent doubtless he had already disinherited her as he had so often threatened. It was then that for hours together Hector remained silent and gloomy, not looking at her, or looking at her furtively when her eyes were not turned toward him. Had the moment now come for her to see that she had been indulging in a disastrous dream? The true test whether a man and a woman are fit to be united comes in the sober moments of their intercourse. To Rebecca's dismay it began to seem as if Hector whom she had once thought brilliant was only trivial and commonplace. Like a true southerner he showed his contempt for northern seriousness. He loved gaiety, and said that now he meant to enjoy himself. His personal economies would cease since they had brought him no advantage. He had thrown his youth away in miserable attempts to save money; now he would change his tune. He announced himself

frankly as a pagan. He talked big. His enthusiasm for politics was unreal. He would cast politics to the dogs, and begin to enjoy the life *sans souci*, the life in the sun which was the birth-right of all Neapolitans. Rebecca was to look sharp, and learn Italian. He said it was irksome to stammer in English, and he was tired of French. As one by one the revelations came, Rebecca began to look not forward but backward, and when she arrived at the city of her dream she was oppressed by homesickness. The irritation incident to arrival at Naples by sea increased misgivings, although, afterward, during the first few days he spent with her in the vineyards, she began to hope that all her misgivings were unreal. But now the sight of Vacca and Tizio gave her, she knew not why, a shock of terror. And when at the same moment her husband rated her for her voluntary poverty, there came the inevitable collapse. Never perhaps had a soul so sudden and bewildering a revelation.

"The sweet bride tarries," said Vacca, tapping at the door. "May we not see her? May we not come in?"

"We shall be immediately," said Hector, urging his wife to come at once.

"Good morning, lady. I kiss my hand in salute," said Vacca, moving back to the ballroom with Tizio.

In a few moments Rebecca entered with a

forced smile. She was scarcely the magnificent bride Vacca had expected. His sharp eyes detected the dress she had worn at one of his own receptions a few months ago. Then she had seemed positively regal, but now she came forward half apologetically in a faded gown. It seemed strange. He glanced from her to Hector, and then poured out volubly his congratulations.

"This is a hasty honeymoon, but good bees work quickly," he said, offering to Rebecca his fat, short hand, which she took. Then he asked for her father and mother, and she said they were well. Tizio also offered his hand, and she was insulted by the undue pressure of his fingers. She felt like an orphan and a helpless child before the three men, and had hardly a word to say except that she was tired. They began to speak in the difficult dialect of Naples which she did not understand. She had the feeling of an unprotected woman. Tizio seemed as ominous as ever, with his eyes half kindled and yet half cold. The instincts of the married woman now told her how dangerous he was.

"Ah, then, welcome to Naples, countess!" said Vacca, dubiously. "And Tizio, who lives close by, will do all your business for you, so that when you have your father's cheques to cash you need not trouble coming all the way to the bank. He will take them for you."

She was on the point of saying that probably she would never handle her father's cheques again, when Hector signed to her to stop.

"We shall see much of you," said Vacca. "But you are tired. It is the new air. You shall sleep. Adieu. Maddaloni, I wish to talk with you."

Rebecca bowed and retired. As she walked up the long passage leading to her bedroom, she saw the doorway of the cloakroom where Hector had first kissed her and Tizio had watched. Her head was reeling. She lost her way, as she had done more than once already in the maze of lobbies and vestibules, and opened one door after another only to see empty rooms. She wondered what it all meant. There seemed to be nobody ever in the vast house, not even a permanent servant. Every floor was bare except for the dust which was on every floor. It seemed impossible to believe that this was the brilliant palace where she had danced her heart away. In one room into which she stumbled she saw empty picture frames leaning against the wall, and mirrors which had been removed from their fastenings and had been cracked and split in the process, and there was also a gilt-legged table shoved toward a window. She came out, and at last groped her way through the dark passage to her bedroom, and lay down on the bed sick and dumb.

CHAPTER II

IT is not easy to understand why De Stendhal called Toledo Street, which is the principal street in Naples, the gayest in Europe. It is a long and very narrow street, leading upward to the heights above the city, and passing directly under the Maddaloni palace, tortuous, irregularly paved, noisy, crowded with vehicles of all sorts, and with men and women of all sorts, with narrow pavements on which hardly two persons can walk abreast, and on which the goats, as they are driven up to the morning pasture woods and lands, or down in the evening for milking, are allowed to walk as often as they please, brushing against ladies' frocks, or butting the legs of the golden youth of Naples. It is not the gayest, but perhaps the most suggestive of all European streets. The thieves of Naples call it "the wood" (*il bosco*), because it is so dense with men and women that a thief, if he has picked the pocket of one person, may easily hide behind another and another until he is lost in the crowd, and can betake himself up one of the narrow lanes which run from each side of the street. During most hours of the day one-half is in shadow owing to the height of the houses, but

toward noon when the sun is in mid heavens, the whole street is enveloped in light. To know all its phases, it must be walked at all hours of the night and of the day, in the morning before dawn breaks over the city, and revellers may be seen leaving their hiding-places and finding their way home for the day's sleep, "making a dark night of half the day;" and at night when all the shops are closed except the cafés, and the restless crowds move from piazza to piazza. Neapolitans are noctambulists, and love their city as much when it covers itself, like London, with the dark as with a garment. The great red beacon of Vesuvius is the city's torch and pillar of fire by night, and in the starry south there is always a great league of stars. The sea, all the silver and gold of it, pouring round the happy isles, is the city's broad southern gate, and when it is moon-bright or moon-yellow as in autumn, there is no more amazing scene. Temples of the Saracens, temples of Serapis, old shrines of the sun and pillars of forgotten gods may still be seen, watching the bay from their ruins, and stretching gaunt arms out of forgotten ages. And although those altars and symbols are now dust, the heart of Naples is still pagan, city of suffering, bride that has endured the caresses and lusts of countless aliens and barbarians, when they came to make their bed with her by the sea. Mysterious mistress who has

been in wedlock with North and South, and in harlotry with East and West, putting on gold raiment of the morning, all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies! Her streets indeed may be gay, but her gaiety is full of the earnestness of vital and organic passion. It is a gaiety whose goal is persons as well as things, and which, if unsatisfied, never lets itself go unavenged. In no other land is love more jealous, and in none does it become so rapidly a condition of mutual suspicion and distrust. If, for instance, a girl of the lower classes is betrothed, and her lover happens to see her speaking with a man, were it only to ask the time of day, there will be a duel, or what is worse the enraged lover might inflict some wound which the camorristi call "sfregio" on the face of the girl, as a mark that she belongs to him alone. "If I see thee with another, woe to thee!" (*Se io ti vedo con un altro, guai!*) is what a man says to his mistress. Countless women may be seen marked for life by razor-cuts on their faces, which means that they are the property of camorristi, and what is stranger still, they are proud of these marks as a sign of their lover's affection.

Toledo Street becomes most crowded in the

afternoon, as the stream of carriages passes down to the garden by the sea. The west front of the Maddaloni palace faces it, with more than a dozen balconies overlooking the traffic below. The north side faces Maddaloni Street, which is narrow like a lane, and leads to the street of the image-makers and Santa Chiara. The south side has been built up, and there is no view, while the east side looks on to the street of Saint Anna, which is quiet. Rebecca's bedroom had balconies on the noisiest side, and for the first month or so after her arrival she might have been seen sitting in one of them and watching the endless stream passing beneath. Italy is the land of balconies and verandahs, as if life were only a spectacle or procession to be gazed at. The poorest hovel has some balcony or other where the inmates may enjoy the sun. Rebecca began to recognise people who took up their position day after day at the windows opposite, as if they never wearied watching the two currents, the up and the down, of the city's life. She began to distinguish the various cries of the flower-sellers and vendors of fruit, who go about with fruit-carts decked with branches, and of the newsboys and itinerant cooks and street merchants of cheap jewellery, as they passed her windows. Day after day the same people passed at the same time, young men with faces handsome but often wasted, dressed elegantly in English

clothes, and women dressed in more audacious toilets than ever the smoke of London would permit; beggars in the complexity of their rags, and children with divine faces, half naked in the sun. Not the gayest, but one of the most tragic streets in Europe, hard pathway of Astarte, goddess of being, goddess of all delusion! There is no other street in Europe so pagan, so full of the allures of beauty, none in which the mutual glance to discover corresponding vices is so rapid and keen. But if the observer has a heart and a brain to feel and understand, he will discover amid all the fatigue of their intrigue a peculiar melancholy. Their songs, even when the words are trivial, are full of it, like songs of sirens under old sea-rocks. Rebecca discovered that melancholy, as she sat watching the unfamiliar scene. Her husband asked her to go out, but she sat within doors oppressed by homesickness like a child in a new harsh school. The sudden change of climate had made her unwell, and it was unfortunate that she was not spared the knowledge that the sudden change of moral climate would likewise bring about in her nothing short of a spiritual collapse!

Try as she might, she could not banish the thought that she was in the hands of three men. How the insidious truth that her husband was somehow not her protector had gradually worked its way into her brain, she could hardly say. But

she began to count her steps like some one nearing a precipice. A cold onlooker would have said that already one-half of her love for him was gone. She saw by degrees that she was only to be the medium of his pleasure and fortune. Like all good women she decided to try to build him up, though the hope died away as it was formed. Surely, she thought, her love for him was his real fortune. His idleness, his vanity, which now became more apparent than when she had been idealising rather than studying him, his confused notions of right and wrong which painfully baffled her northern sense, the hundred differences which made them look at life and at the world in ways diametrically opposed, would give her scope enough, she thought, for that task of reconstruction of a man, which many women courageously undertake. She could hardly admit to herself that his dark eyes had something sinister in them, something she had not seen at first, that his smile was more forced, and that his kiss was less passionate. Ah, it was strange that now she hardly desired his kiss! When she ventured to ask why the rooms were half empty and the palace was so desolate, and why the servants had not yet come home, she got an answer which made her tremble for their future. He told her that if she had any furniture she had better put it into the rooms, that the Maddaloni palace was empty because the Maddaloni purse was empty,

and that as for servants there were none, and that she would have to content herself with the service of the old woman who brought her coffee in the morning and carried up the dinner, such as it was, in the evening, from a neighbouring cook-shop.

"Well," said Rebecca, although she was stunned, "it matters nothing to me, Hector, if we are poor. We love each other and that is enough. You shall get some work to do."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Work! I shall make money at cards to-night and at the lottery. You English have not got the lottery. It is a wonderful affair. I have chosen the numbers I shall play this week. Lend me some money. I shall pay it all back. We shall win!"

She watched the credulous smile breaking over his face, while her heart sank as it had never sunk before. Had she married an idiot? In vain she exposed the folly of such a plan. He only shrugged his shoulders, and told her she didn't understand. "If," he said, "our fortune falls very low, doubtless your horrible father—my God, what eyes he had!—will give you money. I owe Vacca heaps, you know."

Rebecca shrank back from him as he came forward asking money. She said that, as she had already told him, she had only fifty English pounds, and that come what might, she would

never beg from her father. She had no right to expect anything.

"But," he said passionately, "give me the money. Vacca will change it for me. I shall win with it, and it will make a beginning. I shall play the number of your house in Pont Street, and the number of your father's bank in Lombard Street. These should be lucky, since they represent so much wealth. And then I shall play the date of our marriage day."

That may not be lucky, thought Rebecca, amazed at his idiocy. And although he told her that all Naples believed these things, and played numbers every day, sometimes winning large sums at the lottery, it certainly did not conciliate her. She felt an unspeakable oppression at her heart, which only those who have hoped great hopes and been deceived ever feel. Love was surely near his lees. As for the money, she said she would have to buy dresses. How, she asked, could she take the position she ought to take among his friends, unless she replenished the meagre stock of clothes, which in the hurry of their departure she had gathered together? He told her that he had no friends, that they were all his enemies, and that he was persecuted for money. And then he said stupidly that his credit was good in the shops, that every one lived on credit, and that she could tell the dressmaker that she was the Countess di Rosa di Maddaloni. She

cried bitterly that she had been brought up differently.

"Ha!" he said, "you will learn our ways in time, no doubt. This is not England, where you are all rich. You are the first poor English person I have met!"

"Hector, Hector," she exclaimed; "is this true? Is it all true, this horrible delusion?"

"Yes," he said, "but I shall make it all untrue if you give me money. Ah, Maddaloni's luck will surely come some day!"

She opened her purse, and gave him a five pound note, eager to get quit of him until she gathered her thoughts. When he was gone she sat motionless on a chair and looking at the carpetless floor, which was made of glossy red bricks. Presently she burst into tears. She wondered what her mother would be doing, and Lady Babington and Roland, and what all her friends were saying about her. Love's madness had carried her away from them all forever? She rose, moving from one part of the room to another, looking up at the roof, which was painted in the voluptuous style of the renaissance. The unrest of the city outside seemed to have entered into her. She wished, however, to see nothing of it, to go nowhere, for she was afraid at the sound of every human foot. The old woman came up to ask if she wished lunch; but Rebecca, understanding nothing, sent her away muttering

that it was a sorry bride. She looked out from her window, and saw people grinning opposite. She thought they were grinning at her, and turned back blushing. A desire to escape seized her. It was the first time she felt the amazing change which had come upon her since she had taken her life into her own hands. She began to miss the hundred little luxuries which a woman needs, and which her father had provided unstintedly. She had hardly proper combs for her hair which was already suffering from neglect. Barkston used to dress it for her, but now her arms became tired as she caught it up. There are times when a woman unfortunately married begins to think that love is only a miserable spiritual riot within her which she should have quelled. She thought of the warmth and depth of affection which had once existed between her father and herself. Is this all? Is this all? She cried bitterly. She went to look at herself in the broad mirror fixed below the crucifix opposite the bed. She was haggard and pale though her eyes were bright with a sort of terror. She began to uncomb her hair which fell in masses on her shoulders. She had slept little since her arrival. Night after night she had counted the hours as they were chimed from a church tower, near, and had numbered her own fears and her husband's snores. One night the moon came through the window, lighting up the bed and

falling full on Hector's face. Rebecca leaned over to look at it. Why had she loved him? In the relaxation of sleep the weakness of his mouth became more visible, but no one would have called the face unhandsome. She shuddered, however, as the thought passed through her that he might be cruel. This was the corpse of love that lay beside her. Nights thus passed in lonely waking had brought the unslept look on her face, and as she saw herself in the mirror she wondered if her beauty had disappeared forever.

Suddenly as she was combing her hair there was a knock at the door. She thought it might be the old woman again, and called her to come in. But when the door opened, and she saw Tizio her heart almost stopped.

"O . . . in the other room," she said. "I shall come if you wish to see me on any business."

"Not at all," said Tizio, who spoke fluent English, "the lady need not trouble. She is more beautiful thus with all her gold about her."

Rebecca caught the jest, and winced.

"Please go," she said.

"Ah," said he, "I have come to say you good morning. From my window at the corner of the street I saw Maddaloni pass down, and I thought that when you were free from his loving presence I might come to salute you, and be of some service."

The fact that he spoke English, which Hector refused to stammer in any more almost conciliated her, and made her feel that this strange boy was welcome. He seemed younger and slimmer than ever, and his extraordinary eyes arrested her imagination. They were moist and secret and seemed to have looked into the Armageddon of all the passions. He was dressed in a summer suit, white linen breeches and a black jacket without a waistcoat. He put his straw hat upon his knees and sat down, while Rebecca wondered why he had come.

"You are wondering why I have come?" he asked.

"Yes," said Rebecca, abruptly; "in England we are not used to this kind of visitation, you know."

"Ah," replied Tizio, "but if you are to be happy here, you must forget England. Italy is lean. England is fat. Are you homesick?"

"You are very kind," she said, "but even though I were, I do not see why you should trouble yourself about it."

"I thought I might help you to feel more at home. The palace is very cheerless. It is cold in winter, you know. I've seen Maddaloni lie in that bed all day to keep warm."

"I do not receive in a bedroom," said Rebecca, going to the door. "In fact I do not receive people like you at all, but if you have anything

to say I shall see you in one of the sitting rooms."

"Which one?" asked Tizio; "not one of them has anything to sit on! I have really come as a friend to say a thing or two. I know your father. At least I have been in your house in Pont Street."

Rebecca, whose hand was on the door-handle, started, and looked back at him.

"Yes," he went on, "and I am wondering what you think of this bareness after that splendour of yours. You have no carpets for your feet and hardly a chair to sit on. Do you wish carpets and chairs? I will do anything for you."

Rebecca came back, attracted by the kindness of his voice.

"Really," she said, "I should be content with what contents my husband. If it pleases him, it pleases me. Doubtless he will buy furniture later on."

"He has none, not a stick with which we could even thrash him," said Tizio, deliberately.

"I hardly wish, then," she replied, "to discuss him or his affairs with a stranger."

"Ah, but why do you think of me as a stranger? And even although I were, is it not often the case in life that strangers are dearer to you than friends? Will you not allow me to help you? You are in a new city, and although I am

a Neapolitan I ought to tell you that you must take care of yourself in a place like this. A lady like you might get into the hands of the camorra."

"The camorra!" she exclaimed; "my husband warned me against the camorra. You are the camorra, are you not?"

"Ha, ha," laughed Tizio; "no, but he is. We all call each other camorristi here when each wishes to cut the other's throat. The real camorra is unseen, and works havoc among the lower classes of Naples. *I* the camorra! Did *he* say so?"

"Oh no," said Rebecca, "and if anything should happen—what *could* happen?—my husband will be there to protect me."

Tizio shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall go, then," he said, and stood up.

She hesitated, wondering if this youth might become a mainstay in her on-coming troubles. He was surely more ingenious than he seemed. He had evidently known her father and had been really sent to London on business, as he had said, because he began to describe the house on Pont Street.

"Ah, the beautiful drawing-room where you receive your guests, and the silver lamps and the Persian rugs, and your little dog which must miss you! Is the old butler still there? I remember that when I called he saw I was foreign, and was

at first unwilling to let me in! How you English suspect all foreigners! You distrust us, don't you, all you English?"

She noticed that he said hardly a thing which had not reference, more or less disguised, to her present condition. He put his foot on the chair, and his elbow on his knee, and looked at her smiling.

"On the contrary *we* love all you English. I remember your father was kind to me, and gave me a piece of advice which he said he always gave to young men beginning life. 'Young man,' he said, 'I advise you to frequent the company of old men who have seen all the traps and delusions of life. They will be able to warn you of them, and they will help you to exchange the passion and heedless haste of youth for the slow and sure wisdom of years.' I have never forgotten it! It was so kind of him."

"It is so like father!" said Rebecca.

"And I have taken his advice," continued Tizio. "I have been a long, long time with Vacca, who is an old man, and is the Morpeth of Naples, you know, only not so rich! He is very shrewd, and knows all about life, and says that it is nothing but buying and selling, a huge market and nothing more."

Rebecca was struck by those speeches of Tizio. His face was full of intelligence, and his eyes were silver pale. She noticed that while Hector's

chin was square, Tizio's was pointed, and that while Hector's face would likely become gross with years, Tizio's would remain the face of an ascetic, a face made lean by an active and imaginative brain.

"You are a clever boy," she said.

"Ah, yes, I am a boy, I suppose, compared with your husband, but do not misjudge me by this moustache. In the south here we are not so hairy as you are in the north."

She was amused at those curious utterances which betrayed Tizio's ignorance of northern proprieties. They had talked a long time, and Rebecca was now sitting down. Tizio seemed pleased with her condescension.

"You are very beautiful," he said.

"Please——" she replied, rising.

"I beg your pardon. I shall not say it again. Although it is true. Is your father coming out to see you, perhaps?" he asked.

"No," replied Rebecca, blushing. "You know—I suppose you have heard that my husband and I married against his will," which was precisely what Tizio did not know, but suspected, and come to find out.

"No!" he exclaimed, "and what then? He is angry at you? He has disinherited you? Ah, that is bad. That is why he has sent no orders as to paying you money."

"But," said Rebecca, "Hector is so clever that

he will find something to do. I did not know certainly that my husband was so poor."

"You have been dreadfully deceived. I wonder who in the world is the camorrista now! Do you know that the palace, the very bed you sleep on, and those nice warm quilts really belong to Vacca, who has made him large loans?"

Rebecca grew pale.

"But I came to comfort, not to dishearten you——"

At that moment the door opened, and Hector came in. He was surprised to find Tizio and Rebecca together. Consternation and jealousy appeared in his face as he looked from the one to the other to find out what it meant. Tizio took his foot off the chair, and faced the enraged Maddaloni. They said good morning in English, and then Tizio explained that he had been making a morning call on the young bride to salute her, and to ask if she wished any business done at the bank. Then he bowed to Rebecca, and told Maddaloni that he wished to speak with him outside. At a glance he had seen what Maddaloni was thinking. They shut the door, and Tizio walked hurriedly to the end of the passage.

"If you dare touch her!" he said to Maddaloni, who had followed him and had become out of breath and as pale; "if you dare touch her, O God! I shall have your damned blood!"

"By our Lady!" exclaimed Maddaloni,

stunned, "has she been making love to you already! Santa Maria! Shall I be tortured to death?"

"If you dare, if you dare," repeated Tizio, simulating the part of the accepted lover, and seizing Maddaloni by the jacket and shaking him where he stood. "She is a quivering thing—like you!"

Tizio then let him go with another fierce glance, and Hector waited till he had descended the broad stair and till the sounds of his footsteps had died away out of the courtyard below. He stood for a long time motionless at the end of the long corridor. He had just come from Vacca, who had wrung from him the news that Rebecca had been sent away dowerless, and was just recovering from Vacca's threats and imprecations. Meantime Rebecca was waiting in the room like a quivering thing. Had Tizio come for the special purpose of making her miserable by painting such a vivid picture of her home? All her last hopes were dissolving and breaking up, and the gathering tears were blearing the light in her eyes. She heard her husband coming along, and the tears fell faster. Hector might have guessed that she was weeping because of their joint poverty and their joint delusion, but he did not stop to inquire. He judged her as a guilty thing caught in its guilt. Her tears he took to be a revelation of it. And he knew that

Tizio had loved her from the first moment he had seen her. All the madness of an Italian's jealousy broke loose in him, and he rushed into the room, scattering a hell of reproaches on her. Amazed, she looked up, and asked what it meant.

"What does it mean?" he cried, virulent in his imagination of all love's deceit. "It means that if I see you with another, woe! (*Se io ti vedo con un altro, guai!*")

"Oh, no, no! Never!" she cried in vain, as he left the room. "Hector, how can you say it! How can you think it!"

She ran after him, but he shook her off, and left her, wondering what infernal witchery was possessing and bewildering her soul.

CHAPTER III

THUS at Maddaloni palace things were going from bad to worse. Hector had begun to play again in the National Lottery, and every Saturday might have been seen taking up his position among the crowd who stood before the platform where the winning numbers were announced. The few pounds which Rebecca gave him were thrown away without a single gain. He came back to show the tickets to her, and she could hardly suppress her disgust at his folly. Their income was to depend, then, on the hazard of this game! Those tickets are small yellow pieces of paper whose counterfoils are kept in the banks from which they are issued, and bear the amounts which the player has staked and the numbers in the lottery he has chosen. Supposing, for instance, that twenty francs had been staked on one of the spaces called Ambo, the winner receives two hundred and fifty times twenty francs if the numbers he has chosen happen to come out. If he plays Terno, as it is called, and his numbers are successful, he gains four thousand two hundred and fifty times twenty francs. But if he lays his money on Quaterno, he will gain sixty thousand times the amount deposited. Thus

it is easy to see why the lottery, which dangles these sums before the people, had such a fascination for the impecunious count. By a happy hit he might win a large sum, and he played unweariedly. It had been presumptuous in him attempting to carry on Maddaloni palace. He was only an obscure member of the stock, but was dazzled by the idea of re-creating the family's fortunes, and so reviving the dukedom. If he became very rich, he would make some present to the State. But the lottery swallowed up all the money he had, and left him unable to pay his debts to Vacca. He had turned the five pounds which Rebecca gave him into one hundred and thirty-two francs, all of which were lost. The same thing would be repeated week after week. But even though he was winning in this way every week, Rebecca would have been full of contempt for such a method. She urged him to give it up. She had now only thirty pounds, which she was keeping for household purposes. She steadily refused to visit the people she had met when she first saw Naples and him. She was too ashamed of their degradation. Her heart was broken. They were living from hand to mouth on Vacca's sufferance, and she was too proud to let her father know that he was correct when he said she had gone to her deception. What an extraordinary change in her life, and for what? Could she really love him now? At best

she could only pity him. Love's madness was over, and she saw what he was.

Those who had seen her in her splendour a few months ago were surprised to see her now. She was no longer elegantly dressed. Her clothes were the caricature of what they had been, just as the clothes of the poor are the caricature of the clothes of the rich. She had refused to buy new ones, and to pay one of his debts she had even sold some of her jewellery. When he seemed anxious to keep up a display she refused to take part in it. One day he caused the carriage in which he had driven her to the village of his ancestors to be brought up to the door, and when she remained obstinate, and would not enter it to go through the town like a gilded beggar he broke out in a rage. He often left her sitting alone and gazing on the ground, trying to collect her thoughts and to discover what really had come over her life. His insane devotion to the lottery would have been sufficient cause for domestic ruin, but joined to her other troubles it almost made her frantic. In vain she reasoned with him, and when she implored him to take her somewhere into the country to his villa, if he had one as he used to say he had at Sorrento, in order that she might escape Tizio, he said he admired her irony and *finesse*. The day he had found Tizio speaking with her he had rated her not merely on that account, but because, on her

own confession, she had told Tizio that her father had disinherited her. It was precisely this which he wished to hide from Vacca as long as possible. This it was which Vacca had already suspected, however, and it made him extremely careful. For all he knew Rebecca's marriage might cost him his agency at the Morpeth Bank. He wrote off immediately denouncing Maddaloni who, he said, had led people to suppose that he was "substantial." He had hoped that on the strength of his previous assurance that Maddaloni was substantial Mr. Morpeth would have given Rebecca a dowry which would have made things go smoothly at first. Vacca repented his lie, but still he could cover himself. Maddaloni really bore a great name, and who was to know that his ambitions were so much out of proportion. He had called him to his office the day Tizio went to see Rebecca. The usurer knew by his hang-dog look what must have happened. At first Hector foolishly denied that he had eloped with Rebecca until Vacca brought him grovelling to his feet.

"Why did you marry her, then, idiot?" asked Vacca. "What is the good of bringing another mouth to feed. Pay me my bond, and let me have done with you, do you hear? And doubtless, too, there will soon be another mouth to feed!"

"But her father will relax," mumbled the crest-fallen count. "He is very wealthy."

"I should know that better than you," replied Vacca, "but he is also amazingly clever, and I would have laughed to see him turning you about. How much money did she bring?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Good God! And what is it you owe me? Something like fifty thousand of their pounds!"

"Oh, Vacca, Vacca!"

"Yes, yes, and far more. I have the bills. I shall sell you out. Bring your little wife to me. I shall tell her what you are. She would be better with Tizio! Go away."

Hector went at his bidding, and when he was gone Vacca began to ponder over the qualities of English fathers. "Yes, yes," he muttered, "I know him. A terrible old English lion; but he has a spot of tenderness somewhere. He will relent. They are more human than we are, and more troubled by their consciences. I had better be kind to this chuck. He will remember it to my good. If I could get her out of this scrape. But they're married!"

He waited for Tizio's return, and when he saw him began to rub his hands together.

"Well, well," he said, "ha, ha. Is our little woman happy? Is wifeling a perfect chuck? Let us hear, let us hear."

"I think she's made of strong stuff, though she's a woman," said Tizio. "God, how lovely! She was blushing all over because I had an in-

terview in her bedroom. She's not the ordinary sort. She's the kind of woman who would be a bigot in her love. Ha, if that man hadn't been a fool! I'm almost sorry for her. She would die for the man she loved, but she'll only love one at a time, or perhaps only one in all her life. That's love's bigotry! She knows now she's a beggar. The old fox has disinherited her."

"And that fool has been here trying to deny it," exclaimed Vacca.

"She told me everything," said Tizio, "with her gold hair all down her back. Such hair!"

"What to do?" said Vacca, with his brows knit, "he'll not be hard on her. We must keep down her worries. Jesu, it's a pretty chuck, as you say. We'll let things go smoothly till the child's born. Perhaps then the old lion will relent. It's always so strange that on the advent of the baby, which instead of simplifying things makes them worse, adding a new brawler to the world, the wrathful parents generally forget and forgive. Eh, Tiz, such a happy-go-lucky world!"

"Even if he had all her money," said Tizio, "every farthing would go in the lottery."

"Of course," said Vacca, "but we'll save some of it—for ourselves if for no other one."

Hector did not tell Rebecca that Vacca had refused to lend him any more money. But in any case Rebecca would doubtless have seen nothing of it. Everything would have gone on

the lottery. Meantime nothing was provided for the commonest household expenses. The sudden drop from wealth to poverty was almost unbearable. Her husband was absent all day, and she remained alone, dreading Tizio's visits. At night the huge bedroom was lit by one solitary candle, and she used to sit timorous in the semi-darkness listening for footfalls. Or she passed out to her balcony overlooking the busy street below. Irresistibly her thoughts travelled home. Among all the men and women she knew there was only one to whom she would have spoken her soul bare, and that was Roland. She knew now that he must have loved her. Now she sought not love but comfort. She had given her life up, she had given everything, and for what? She asked herself again, where were her husband's ambitions, knowledge, power, and goodness? Here had been an amazing witchcraft of love. She seemed to have fallen among the dregs of things. Naples, City of the Sun, had no beauty for her any more. The waves might sing idly on the shore, she would neither look nor listen. It was a hard way for her to learn the truth,—“Ye worship ye know not what!” Unluckily, human idols cannot be cast out like other cracked and broken dolls of our vanity. They persist. Alas, they are alive! It is marvellous if we even succeed in causing their unclean spirits to pass out of them. This is

love's miracle if it ever happens, to leave those human temples swept and garnished, and to bring into them some air of redemption! Had she not tried it bravely? Did she love him any more? How was that possible? She asked him why they were living on in the palace. It was a mockery she said, and she proposed they should leave the city, gather together what they possessed, and endeavour to make ends meet somehow or other. He shrugged his shoulders, saying that he could not tear himself away from the old palace or from the public gaming table. He told her to go home if she was not pleased. A certain immobile despair possessed her as she heard these words, and she waited on, almost indifferent as to the end of it all.

Once when she was pacing the great empty ballroom, thinking about the night when she believed him to be the most perfect man alive, she heard a footfall in the long gallery. She started, and looked up, and saw Vacca leaning on the balustrade looking down. He had been taking an inventory of the mirrors and testing the worth of the gold ornaments. Rebecca was affrighted, and gave a shrill cry.

"Bride!" he said, "you take your walk like a ghost through this long hall. I shall be down immediately."

He came hobbling down, and shook her by the hand quite merrily.

"Bride," he said, smiling, "your sitting-room is rather large."

"Yes, and empty," said Rebecca, still pale from the fright.

"Where is your husband?"

"I don't know," said Rebecca.

"Absent husbands, happy wives, eh?" asked Vacca.

Rebecca not appearing to acquiesce, Vacca continued, "Well, it's a good thing he's absent, since I must say some unpleasant things about him."

"I would rather not hear them," said Rebecca, with a vague appeal in her eyes.

"Ah, that's the way with you Northerners. You're far truer than we are. If you make a bad bargain you've the good grace and pride to stick to it, and keep quiet. I prefer to do business with you people. But, bride, it's my duty to speak to you about your dear husband. I am your father's agent. True, he has told me to give you no money, to refuse all your prayers and supplications and so on. But, ha, old Vacca won't be too hard on a pretty chuck. Look you, it won't do. This Maddaloni—by the way he's not a Maddaloni—it's a lie."

"Not a Maddaloni!" exclaimed Rebecca.

"I'll tell you about that afterward. Anyway a pauper Maddaloni is of no use to anybody, is he? But I was saying that the fellow has de-

ceived us all. I have lent him large sums which he has never paid. It is true that out of the wreck of his fortune he bought part of this building, but I've had to mortgage almost the whole of it for him. He spends huge sums on the lottery, you know."

"Oh, I know," said Rebecca.

"Well, then it is wicked of him to have carried you off in this way. Don't suppose that all Neapolitans are like that. I shall help you. Do you need money? Eh? I am sure your father will relent."

"Oh, never. I would rather not take money. It is good of you, Signor Vacca——" and here she burst into tears.

"Halt, halt, pretty chuck," cried Vacca, "old Vacca will protect you. This must be an awful experience. He's been deceiving us all, and not paying his debts. It's a cunning dog the Maddaloni."

"But he's not a Maddaloni, you say?" asked Rebecca, looking at him through her tears.

"No," said Vacca; "all the Maddaloni are dead. He's not one. If we ever have called him one it's only in jest. A count he is in his own right, but he comes of some obscure Calabrian stock which a Maddaloni, supposing there was one living, would not recognise. It seems that through some bastard blood or other they got mixed up with some one who had Maddaloni

blood in his veins, and on the strength of it this creature imagines himself a Maddaloni! When the palace was for sale he stepped in, and tried to buy it, hoping to be recognised, but we all laugh at him."

"This completes the fiasco, then," said Rebecca. "He's not a Maddaloni!"

"No, and never will be. Sweet Mary, he a duke! When we call him Maddaloni, it's to mock him by using his own language. Some of us did think once there was good stuff in him, and backed him up, but now we've had enough of him. He thinks he's a Maddaloni because he lives in this old palace. He is in no way whatever descended from the duke who died in 1841. He's an impostor, that's what he is; but nobody takes him seriously. For all I know he may be descended from a Maddaloni cook or housemaid! It's all come out lately. He could be prosecuted for wearing the arms. Sweet Mary, he a Maddaloni! His interest in his ancestors, as he calls them, and his filial devotion to this their palace is really a joke. He's the butt of the town wits."

"Please don't lend him money," said Rebecca, sick at heart, "he'll never be able to repay."

"Ah, does Vacca care when a pretty chuck is at stake! No, no. Such a world, bride. There's nothing but what can be bought and sold. Such a silly world, which makes no face at you if you

sell your house or a very big thing, but laughs if you sell your clothes or your shoes! Why, I would sell my pocket-handkerchief if the humour took me. Everything is sold, pride, vanity, repute, even a bride sometimes, you know. Your old father would agree?"

"Not quite," said Rebecca.

"No, he wouldn't agree if I sold *you*, would he? *We* sometimes have a little bit of conscience too, just a little bit, like a poor little newsboy in us crying out great events whose momentousness he hardly knows, eh?"

"I never knew the world was so awful," said Rebecca, "I am afraid."

"Why, why, why? Does he pinch you at night? The villain! I'll put Tizio into the house to protect you."

"Oh—no!" exclaimed Rebecca. "Please, never. I—do not like him."

"Don't be afraid of *us*, bride. *We* are your friends, your father's agents, you know. Don't be afraid. Tizio is a hearty lad."

"Oh, I am afraid, Signor Vacca, I don't know why."

"Never think of it, dear. Old Vacca will take the place of your angry papa," he said, rubbing his beard. "Love is all very well, but too giddy, eh? Too much of it gives a headache, eh, like a magnolia. But you do like our city. Come now. The blazing piazzas!"

"No, no; I hate it."

"Ah, that's because you hate the man that brought you. But we've got a proverb which says that once the hedge is made, we must set about vine-planting. Make the best of it, bride," said Vacca, leaving her in a conflict of confidence and distrust.

And she did decide to make the best of it. She made a supreme last effort to love him, trying to forget everything that was frightening her, and looking once more for a resurrection of the dead flowers of her affection.

"Hector," she once said, as he came in downcast and haggard as if through fear of his enemies, "it *will* be all right. Our possessions are the least important thing if we possess each other."

"But if another possesses you?" he said, looking at her fixedly.

"Another? What do you mean?"

"Tizio, yes, he loves you."

"Hector, how can you say it? O how? I hate him. Has he told you horrible lies?"

"Yes; he says you love him."

"O God, what am I to do?" she cried. "Take me away; let us go away. Let us live at Sorrento where you said you had a villa. Oh, don't let our young years be blasted, Hector. I gave myself up to you. I—love—I shall love you still."

"Ah, do you speak true?" he said, coming near her. "They tell me you have been saying nasty things about me, and warning them not to lend me money."

"Yes, Hector, I did say that. Here is money. I will give you the last I have. Don't take it from them. If we live rightly my father will turn kinder," she said, handing him the last English notes.

"Ah, thus," he said, taking her hand, and crushing the notes between his fingers. "Let us go out together, then. I believe you. Look you, it is so warm still. They are still bathing although it's October. Shall we go to Sorrento, then, to the great sea-bath of Queen Joanna. Petrarch in his wonderful letters talks about her, you know. Shall we go and bathe?"

"Yes, yes," she said, willing to do anything to please him.

"But you don't love our city."

"Oh, yes," she said.

"Vacca said you said you hated it."

"I shall hate it if I am not sure of you, Hector," she replied, although she did not say what Vacca had told her about his lineage.

"Well, let us go," he said. "I am sure of you now. You won't love Tizio, will you? I am completely in his power. If he said to me, 'Command her to give me a kiss,' I would have to do it."

"Let us flee!" she said, afraid.

"Let us bathe to-day," he replied, weary of subterfuge and intrigue.

They went, and his eyes were amorous on her that day.

Word was sent to Tizio by his spy, and he prepared to follow them. "Bathing, is it? I shall take my costume, too." They went by steam-boat, and he by train, and he was there before them; for he drove very quickly from Castellammare to Sorrento, and knew the short paths through the woods over the cliffs to the bath of Queen Joanna. He hid himself behind the trees, and watched Maddaloni rowing her from Sorrento to the cape. The sun was still so strong that the boat required an awning. Rebecca put her hand in the water, and felt it warm. "It will be delicious," she said. He rowed along the rocky shore and past the cliffs, from which great shadows fall and are given a mobile wavering life on the waters below. It was noon, and the goat-herds' cries and songs came out of the woods. The fishermen were catching tunny-fish, and closing the nets with shouts from boat to boat. Rebecca, eager to forget her troubles, gave herself up to the gorgeous noon. The soft beat of Hector's oars almost sent her to sleep. She looked back and saw Vesuvius purple like a Scotch mountain in heather. The white smoke was blowing southward. She began to think that

here in the South human needs were fewer, and that the state of poverty at which she had arrived mattered perhaps less than it would have mattered at home. She would live in these tropics, and try to discover once more the tropics of love that had become so cooled. What was the use of imagining tragedy? She wished to live in peace, and enjoy the sun. She would adapt herself as best she could. That morning all beauty seemed to come back. She longed for the scent of hayfields, and to see gay reapers laughing and binding in the sun. She would bathe in the azure sea. And thus just as she was entering the great sea-bath, she felt happier than she had done since she had left her home. The entrance is very narrow, so that the oars must be suddenly lifted from the rowlocks. Hector who was a skillful oarsman guided the boat in without a bruise. Originally this natural sea-bath must have been roofed over in the days when Petrarch was writing from Joanna's court. The voluptuous queen had here built some lovely pleasure house. But now great masses of the fallen structure are lying in the midst of the bath, blocking it up, although there are numerous deep pools. Once inside, a boat may be rowed in the basin, and drawn up on the beach. The sea gurgles round in eddies, especially if the waves outside are high, and come bursting and clamouring through the narrow inlet. But that day it was calm. The water

was limpid and deep enough for a swimmer, although sometimes the rough rocks might grate his knees. But Hector and Rebecca decided to swim outside into the blue sea beyond. There was no one about, or at least, no one was visible. The land slopes down steeply toward the basin. Tizio lay concealed behind one of the masses of rock on the hillside, while Hector and Rebecca prepared to enter the water. He heard the splash, and saw them swim out. He darted down and undressed rapidly, putting on the usual *costume de bain* which men use at Italian bathing-places, and which reaches to the knees. He was a fine swimmer. Hector and Rebecca were already far out, but he began to gain on them. Rebecca swam more rapidly than Hector, and was beyond him. Tizio was a master at the Indian stroke which all Italian boys learn. He soon made up on Hector, saluted him and passed on. Hector almost fainted when he recognised him, and gave a cry which Rebecca did not hear. Tizio was gaining on her too by the extraordinary rapidity of the hand-over-hand strokes. She thought it was Hector coming behind and turned round. At the sight of Tizio she gave a shriek, and was apparently sinking as a result of the shock. Tizio reached her and caught her, asked breathlessly what was wrong. Meantime Madaloni was swimming out as fast as he could, filling the air with noise. Tizio had hold of Re-

becca with one hand, and was swimming back with the other. "Leave her, leave her," he called to Maddaloni, swimming up. "What is it! I may bathe as well as you."

"Take me in!" cried Rebecca, "I am drowning."

But Tizio kept her up. He was perfectly self-conscious, and the only one aware of comedy.

"I'm not a whale or a shark!" he said.

But Rebecca heard nothing, and was very faint, her eyes almost closed. He still held her up while Maddaloni came on behind in a state of consternation. They were nearing the land, and Tizio left her to strike out for herself.

"Why, what's wrong?" asked Tizio, standing in the water. "Don't ladies and gentleman bathe together in England? I've heard they do. Anyway, I was here before both of you."

Rebecca walked out of the water, took up her things, and went behind a rock, while Maddaloni looked on dumb. Presently she heard high words between the two men, followed by a splash in the water and a cry which she recognised to be her husband's. She came running from her hiding-place, and saw that Tizio had thrown Maddaloni half-dressed into the water again. "Dare touch her!" he was saying while Maddaloni rose gasping for breath. He looked back at Rebecca. "Dare touch her, dare!" Tizio was still crying.

"It's all right," gasped Maddaloni, as if at the

bidding of the boy usurer. "It was a misunderstanding. Tizio usually bathes here. He was here before us."

"I shall row you both back," said Tizio. "Your hand is bleeding. Did you scrape a rock in falling?"

Maddaloni said yes.

"*I* shall walk back," said Rebecca.

But Maddaloni, with a strange laugh, ordered her to get into the boat.

CHAPTER IV

AND now we must leave Rebecca, bewildered in her new surroundings, and turn back to see what had happened in her own home since her escape. Briggs had been the first to make the discovery. He was usually first up in Pont Street, and on that particular morning, on his way down to the dining-room, he saw that Hector's bedroom door was open. He passed on, however, reflecting that the stranger was less a lie-a-bed than he had at first supposed. But when he found as he reached the next floor that Rebecca's bedroom door was also open, his suspicions were aroused. He put the two things together, and laid his finger on a pretty plot. Before entering Rebecca's room he ran downstairs to look for any further traces of a hurried departure, and found the dog snuffing among the rugs in the hall. "Eh, what d'*you* know? What d'*you* know?" Briggs asked him excitedly, as the dog kept wagging his tail and looking sagaciously up. "Here's a pretty mess!" exclaimed Briggs, as he noticed that the stranger's hat and coat were away, and that Miss Rebecca's umbrella was not in its usual place. He went upstairs again as fast as he could, and wakened Barkston who was in a profound sleep. When

she wakened up and saw Briggs bending over her, she exclaimed :

“Merciful Heavens! Is this gentlemanly conduct, Mr. Briggs?”

“Missis Barkston,” says he, “get up this instant.”

“Gracious!” shrieked Barkston, and buried herself deeper in the bedclothes, covering her face.

“Missis Barkston,” continued Briggs, pulling the counterpane, “listen to me.”

“Have you been under the bed all night, sir?” asked Barkston, in a muffled voice. “Here’s a shock.”

“Yes, Missis Barkston, it is, I’ve ’ad a shock too. Miss Rebecca’s away!”

Barkston sat bolt upright and turned her eye on Briggs.

“If this ain’t a ’orror!” said Briggs, looking at Barkston.

“Maybe,” says she, uncertain whether he was referring to herself; “but ’ave you been in the rooms?”

“No,” replied Briggs; “but both doors are open and both birds are flown, if I’m not mistaken. I ’aven’t wakened the guv’nor yet.”

“Mercy!” exclaimed Barkston, and then turning to Briggs again said, “Mr. Briggs, go away.”

Briggs went to the door, but looked back. Mrs. Barkston was still sitting upright in bed.

"Ah, Missis Barkston," said he, and kissed his hand. Then he went downstairs, and crept quietly into Hector's room, but there was no one in it. The bedclothes were half turned down, and the sheets were still warm. "My God!" he said as he came out quickly and went down another stair to Rebecca's room. The door was not wide open, but only ajar. Briggs thought he would listen for a little, saying to himself that "if they were there whisperin' inside, it would 'ave been better if they'd gone away!" No sounds of whispering came, however, and he entered the room. Rebecca's bed was also warm, as if only a short time had passed since she had risen. The room was in great disorder, and bore all the marks of a hurried departure.

Then Briggs raised the hue and cry. He knocked at Mr. Morpeth's door, but before Mrs. Morpeth had risen to open, wondering what was wrong, Briggs had called through the keyhole the terrible news. Mr. Morpeth rose asking what it was all about, and thinking the house was on fire. Briggs heard him, and repeated the news at the top of his voice. Neither the banker nor his wife ever recovered from this shock. In the blind conflict of feelings which began to rage in the old man, he tried to discover whether Rebecca or his wife were more to blame for the only disaster that had ever overtaken him. Lady Babington always declared that it was his rage

against Mrs. Morpeth which brought on her death, so that Rebecca never saw her mother again. He never forgave her, except perhaps in a wild moment of grief and reconciliation at the end. At one blow all his hopes were crushed out of him. What was worse, his name was disgraced, the fair name of Morpeth. In the whole annals of the family such a thing had never occurred. It was natural that in the first outburst of his indignation he refused even to ring up detectives to go in search of her. "Let her go!" he cried. Hardly twenty-four hours had passed before he had disinherited her. Old Jerdan had never seen him so upset.

"Oh, Jerdy," he said, "it makes me curse the day I was a father. What horrible ingratitude! I gave that girl everything she asked for. There was nothing I would not have given her.—Oh—oh——" he cried, and buried his face in his hands.

"May God be with her even though she makes her bed in hell!" he continued, struggling against his wrath. "Did I not bring her up to be a pure woman? O God! Elopement! My mouth turns sick at the word."

"They have been married," said Jerdan, trying to soothe him. "I got all the registrars' offices searched. They were legally married the very morning they left."

The banker looked up, partially relieved.

"She has married a penniless blackguard. How do I know too whether she was not carried off against her will? She had begun to give in to me. O God, what have I done to deserve this!"

Curiously enough Vacca's letter, intimating that Maddaloni had the reputation of being a "substantial person," arrived that morning. But the banker made no further inquiries. As she had made her bed she would have to lie on it.

"Miss Rebecca to 'ave gone awy and done such a thing!" exclaimed Briggs, "Missis Barkston, how is it explained?"

"Well, Mr. Briggs," said she, "when the corporal loved me I must say that if my parents 'ad been unwillin', I'd 'ave done the same as miss. I'd 'ave run awy too."

"Would you run awy with me, Missis Barkston?"

"I'd run awy from you, Mr. Briggs, far enough."

"Well," says he, "it's always the same. If there's a good 'un and a bad 'un, women choose the bad 'un. There was Captain Roland waitin' for Miss Rebecca, and she wouldn't 'ave him."

The home at Pont Street suddenly changed its aspect so that Barkston and Briggs began to be dejected. Dinner parties ceased, and the banker sat night after night alone in his library receiving no one. He refused to hear Rebecca's name

mentioned, and it was as if she had never been his daughter. Her bedroom was shut up, and no one ever entered it. Callers knew that after a brief expression of their sympathy nothing else was expected of them. Only Lady Babington was permitted to hear any news which from time to time arrived by indirect means from Naples. Mrs. Cayley and her set had, of course, plenty to talk about, and would have wished more. Roland's dejection, however, was always there as something to fall back upon when gossip about Rebecca herself became scarce. The unmarried Wallers expressed themselves shocked, and said they had never expected such a thing from Rebecca. But Lady Middlemass said Rebecca was perfectly right, and that it was the pluckiest thing she had ever done. She proposed that some of them should get up a party; and go out in spring to see her. As yet, of course, no one knew how it was faring with Rebecca, and Mr. Morpeth had forbidden his wife to write to her. But she continued to send letters to the missing child.

It was painful when the old man rose at night calling out her name. "Rebecca! Rebecca!" Sometimes in his nightmare his wife could hardly persuade him to stay in bed. He used to start as if he heard her footsteps in his dreams. When he awoke, he often found himself expostulating on the floor, and then, rather than go back to

bed, he would pace the room till the morning. Weeks and weeks passed before they had any news of her, and it was well into January before timid little notes were sent, care of Lady Babington, on whom Rebecca could always count. Of course she wrote nothing at first which might make them imagine the sort of condition she was in. While she asked forgiveness, it was evident that she was trying to write with enthusiasm regarding the new life she had chosen. But gradually her mother seemed to detect a different tone, which made her anxious. As yet Rebecca said nothing positive regarding her disappointment and her despair, but her letters bore the elusive marks of a writer struggling to avoid the transmission of unpleasant news, and yet, for ever hovering on the verge of it. She was peculiarly silent as to her husband. She hardly mentioned his name. Once or twice she was evidently hinting about the expected birth of a child, and she seemed longing to ask her mother to come to her. Mrs. Morpeth was at that time very weak, and indeed, entering on the illness to which she finally succumbed. Even supposing her husband had permitted her, it would have been impossible for her to go. But she whispered the news to Lady Babington, who promised to go in her stead. One day Mrs. Morpeth was surprised to receive a letter urgently imploring money. Her worst fears were realised, but she said nothing to her

husband and sent Rebecca what she had. The letter of thanks which came back showed clearly that some serious crisis had been averted. It made the strain greater that she was unable to share her anxiety with her husband. He remained inexorable, shut up in his own thoughts, and playing the game of finance not, as formerly, for any ulterior aim, but simply for its own sake and as the result of habit. At this time Francis Roland began to come about him again. Since Rebecca had darkened both their lives the bond of sympathy became closer. Roland was genuinely sorry for the old man, who, in spite of his strength, now bore marks of having come through a great trial. The younger man received confidences which were given to no other. He gave him the advice which he gave to Tizio.

"Ah, Frank," he said, "consort with old men. Ask them frequent questions. It's what I did when I was young. An old man like myself will warn you off the traps that are laid in youth. If my headstrong girl had listened to me she would have been your wife, and my daughter to-day."

"But she is getting on well?" asked Roland.

"I suppose you hear from your agent."

"I hear," said he, "more than I care to talk about. My wife thinks I am in ignorance, but Vacca tells me she is leading a cat-and-dog life, and that my precious son-in-law is up to the eyes in debt, and wishing, if you please, to negotiate

a loan on Rebecca's interest in my estate! I remain deaf. Interest in my estate! Rebecca has now very little interest in my estate. You have as much, my boy. Rebecca could not go unpunished for her disobedience."

"I will get furlough, in spring," said Roland, "and I am thinking of going to Naples. Lady Middlemass is making up a party."

"Do as you please, my boy," said the banker, "I have no message for her except this. Her father waits till her bad heart becomes broken. I am aware, ha ha! that she belongs to her husband now and not to me."

The unmarried Wallers were shocked when they heard that their sister and Roland were going to Naples together. At this time Sir Tom Middlemass was among his whales, as his wife said, and she was free to go where she liked. Roland had inadvertently said that he thought of going up the Mediterranean in spring, and when Lady Middlemass asked if she might come with another lady he could not refuse. "Ah, you are going to Naples. I must come to look after you, Captain Roland," she had said. "It is extraordinary the interest men take in other men's wives!" Who the other lady was she had not yet declared. When her sister proposed that they should accompany her, she refused to listen to them, and said the trip was at an end. "No," she said; "I'll tell you who's going with us.

Captain Roland has an old aunt, a Miss Luckily, I daresay you've seen her. Well, she needs sea air, it seems, and she's coming to chaperon us. Oh, I wish it were time to start. She's a quiet old thing, and will be as quiet as the baggage, and I hope not as troublesome." It was no use for any one else expecting to be asked to go, so the unmarried Wallers retired from the dispute, and took up their sciences again. As for Roland every one knew he had been moping, and Lady Middlemass said that some woman ought to take him in hand.

"When I'm in love with a man I'm always quite pale, you know," she said.

"You are quite red, just now," said Roland, looking at her.

She laughed, and said yes. His great *gaucherie*, which sometimes made unconscious hits like this, really amused her. She was philanthropic in a special and original sense. Almost every day when he came from parade she was sure to have a sight of him in his uniform. And once in a crush of carriages she was lucky enough to have him by her side for a few minutes. Roland, who generally appeared shy in drawing-rooms, and entered them almost in protest, was perfectly self-possessed, of course, on a horse. But he allowed her play with him. Sometimes he went to her dinner parties in Onslow Gardens, and he always knew beforehand whom he would take in

to dinner. She was decidedly amusing, and used to talk to him frankly about Rebecca.

"You loved her very dearly, didn't you?"

"Yes, of course," he said blushing.

"You love her yet?"

"Why, what would be the good?" he said, evasively.

"Rebecca is a sweet woman. Does she write you, yet?"

"No," he said. "What would she write about?"

"It was so wicked of her to run away from her old fuming papa! I never thought she had the pluck to do it. Is she happy? No one seems to know anything at all. When we go to Naples we shall see, won't we? Such fun it will be. I will go up to Rebecca in her splendid palace and say, 'Dear Becky, Child Roland to the dark Tower came!'"

"The dark Tower? What's that?" asked Roland, smiling.

"Oh it's a funny poem nobody understands, by a man Browning you've never heard about. The Tower, *I* say, means Love, which contained so many bones and skeletons and burnt-out hearts! Now I see you're getting mixed, so I'll stop. What do you think of her husband?"

"He seemed good enough," said Roland, "what do I know about him. But I don't think he'll understand Rebecca, you know."

"Is she so difficult? Come now. You're jealous—you men are so strange. You torment yourselves about women who don't love you."

"And you women?" he said.

If any other man had said it she would have seen it was meant for a thrust. But Roland had no subtlety, and could have meant nothing by that unconscious repartee. How she loved him just because he was so deliciously dull! The worst of him was, she said, that he seemed to be impersonal, at least toward her. But she could look at him all day. She could hardly believe that he was going to Naples to covet another man's wife. His very devotion to Rebecca or to her memory excited her. His strength seemed so wonderful beside the restlessness of her own nature. Her self-invited presence on the voyage out might be an impertinence, but at least he made no sign that it appeared to him in that light. Of course she knew nothing of the ugly rumour that had reached Pont Street, and it was safe enough in Roland's keeping. She was anxious to see Rebecca's splendour because she used to hear so much about Maddaloni palace from Mrs. Morpeth. Roland had now his doubts, and something seemed to drive him to her rescue. And so in their impatience it seemed both to him and to Lady Middlemass that spring would never come that year.

CHAPTER V

MEANWHILE the terrible months were passing slowly for Rebecca, as if she were locked in some nightmare. She was as yet too proud to say straight out in the tentative letters she was writing to her mother, that her marriage had been a disaster. Yet her husband's impecunious state, aggravated by his devotion to the lottery and private gaming tables, gave her long days and nights of unrest, and his unholy suspicions of her aggravated by the cunning of Tizio, made her seriously desire to escape. Life had begun to appear to her like a most gay plant, foul at the roots. The fact that she could not understand half of what they were saying about her, heightened her terror. She lived in daily fear of some conspiracy against her person. If she escaped, doubtless Tizio would follow her, and Maddaloni's suspicions would only be justified. He had openly convicted her of having invited Tizio to the bath. But for all she knew the desperate man in the power of his usurers had perhaps sold her, and was secretly connivant of Tizio's plot. Everything may be bought and sold, Vacca had said to her, and she dropped on her knees asking God to take care of her. She thought of appeal-

ing to the English consul, but as yet her husband had done nothing which was not within his right. She had to take the consequences of her marriage. Behind Tizio and Hector there was Vacca, a sinister little old man, always smiling, but of whom she was never sure, whose promise was always accompanied by a menace. Was this the camorra, or an outpost of it? It was not the camorra, but only a poisoned fang of it. Vacca had seen many a bride in as pitiful a state as Rebecca, but none had ever been so interesting.

Against herself he had no grudge. His relations with her father luckily weakened his hold on her, and he was baffled how best to play. He believed that in the end she would be an heiress, and therefore moved cautiously in her regard. He marvelled at the strength of mind which made her refuse his offer of help. But he waited, expecting Maddaloni and she to be arrested for bankruptcy. Then his chance might come. It was doubtful if he really knew of Tizio's serious passion. At any rate, it was not Vacca who had sent the boy to bathe. And it seemed the most natural thing in the world when Tizio suggested that some one should be put into the palace to keep an eye on the remaining furniture, so that none of it might be carried out to pay the accumulating debts. The frescoes might be removed from the walls, the statues from their pedestals,

said Tizio, to pay other bills than Vacca's. Some one ought to be sent to "distrain" the bankrupt. The great mirrors in the ballroom, and the Oriental tapestries and the gilding might be saved. "Right!" said Vacca, "will you go in?" Tizio jumped at it, and in a few days was installed in Maddaloni palace, and had the room next Hector's and Rebecca's.

His arrival was intimated only a few hours before it took place. Hector looked fixedly at Rebecca, and she burst out weeping.

"I shall leave," she cried.

"Dare!" he said.

"Oh, what infamy! Have you no religion, no God, no pity? Had you ever a sister? Have you no heart? How I am punished!"

He shrugged his shoulders, passing compliments and flattery on her dissimulation, which, he said, was unexpected in a Northerner.

"I am in their hands," he said. "You want to get into their arms. Go, woman, go. I daresay they can squeeze. By our Lady!"

"Let us flee, let us flee," she said, "anywhere. Let us walk out without a penny. Hector—Hector, I am ill."

She fell in a swoon, and when he lifted her she seemed as light as a cypress branch. Vacca got wind of it, and he came to comfort her in his own way.

"Here, chuck, my wife has made this jelly for

you. You're all right. You're among friends. See, see, we are your friends. I have sent Tizio to look after you."

"Oh, take him away."

"Ha! Has your husband been saying anything against Tiz? Oh, the villain! He wishes to persecute you. We shall not have it. We shall look after you, bride."

Weeks were allowed to pass during which she was left unmolested. She was thinking out a plan of escape. Tizio, however, received warning from Vacca to behave discreetly, and though he was officially installed in Maddaloni palace as Vacca's representative, he gave Rebecca no trouble. He passed in and out noiselessly, only saluting her gravely when he saw her in a passage or on a stair. He loved her intensely, and was indeed indirectly the means of sparing her a great deal of trouble. He even paid some of the bills which would have pressed very severely upon her, which was rather an extraordinary thing for a young usurer to do. He thought he had never seen such a beautiful woman. She used to hear him in the next room as he left early in the morning, or came back in the middle of the day, or late at night. And during that time Maddaloni himself seemed to be growing kinder, until Rebecca began to think that perhaps the strange little usurer and his strange young henchman were, after all, her protectors. How

the ordinary expenses of the household were being met, she did not know. Was Vacca supplying the money? Hector never said. At any rate there was a lull. Rebecca reflected on the peculiar life she was leading, which was in such extraordinary contrast to the life she had spent at home. Luxury she had none. It was ludicrous to live in such a vast palace, and to feel oneself no better than the rats and mice. She was never seen out. Neapolitan society might have been a wide field of observation for her, but she refused to enter it. At that time her husband did not ask her, because he was too busy with other thoughts.

The truth was he was playing his last game, and had concocted a great scheme for making money. Goaded by Vacca he did not know where to turn. He had lost irretrievably in the lottery, but now he had a secret which he thought was a mine of gold in itself. Filled with disgust at Rebecca's disinheritance, and resenting the necessity of having to provide for himself, he had at last to consider what means lay in his own wits. Most of his income which came to him in dribblets from the remainder of what rotten property he still possessed, went to pay interest to Vacca, or was squandered in the frantic effort to make money at the gaming table. He was incapacitated for any ordinary work from which to derive a livelihood, so that when the need pressed,

it was only natural that he would adopt fraud as a means of gain. Recently he had been playing in the lottery offices owned by Vacca. But now he began to go to a little bureau in an obscure street leading from the long narrow street of the booksellers. It should rather be called the street of the image-makers, because the booksellers have disappeared, and their shops have been turned into places where images of saints are manufactured in large quantities. There was a man, Antonio Nino, who combined the art of image-making with selling tickets for the lottery. His was a filthy little office, dark, and with a stench in it which came from the pigments with which he smeared his saints. But it was popular among a certain class who had played numbers which had been lucky. Nino published every fortnight a little sheet which professed to be an authentic guide to fortune. It was nothing more than a resumé of past successes, with mention of the winning numbers which the purchaser was advised to play again in the order which suggested itself to him.

Nino's shop used to be crowded by all sorts of needy people, who spent hours discussing the chances in the weekly lottery. If Nino was asked for advice he would point mysteriously to his sheets which lay folded and sealed on the counter, and cost a penny each. Naples contains hundreds such as he, who succeed in making a

comfortable living out of the superstition of the people. Pythagoreanism seems to have taken strong hold of the southern character. Numbers are the basis of everything for them, whether the belief is held by an astute usurer like Vacca, or by the beggar in the street. The streets themselves are full of ambulant bankers who set up their whirligigs, and invite money to be laid on the numbers, opposite any one of which the vane or needle might stop. Generally a friend of the lottery man stands by his side, and puts money on a number opposite which the needle is made to stop by means of a mechanism worked from below, but invisible to the spectators. The friend then pockets his gains which he afterwards returns to the lottery man, but meantime a feeling of confidence and a hope of similar success have been created in others, who keep up the game with loss only to themselves. But when they play in the State lottery Neapolitans make the most trivial occurrences the cause of their choice of particular numbers. If, for instance, any remarkable event in the street takes place opposite a particular door, they will play the number of the door at next lottery, or consult their divining books on the meaning of the event. The number corresponding to God is ninety, a dead king eighty-seven, and so on through a whole imbecile list. Prayers are offered to the saints for guidance, and to the Vir-

gin herself. Nino despised such methods, although he made as much money out of the saints as out of their devotees. He used to cut little rough wooden crucifixes, and then clothe them with clay, or else the framework was of wire or iron, and in that case the clay figure was usually very lean. It was sometimes ghastly to see a huge life figure of Christ waiting for its head to be put on. Saint Clare, Saint Anna, Saint Catherine, Saint Gennaro, Saint Antonio, and a host of others, were his chief stock-in-trade. And a perpetual succession of Virgins and miniature Christs left his shop to find their way into the rooms of the very poorest. Often a mutilated saint was brought back to get an arm or leg put right. The Neapolitans sometimes give them rough usage, beating them like fetishes if prayers are not answered in time. I knew one Neapolitan who had a vermillion statue of Saint Gennaro, by whom all Neapolitans swear. He prayed to it regularly, but not gaining his desires tumbled the unlucky saint into a cauldron of boiling water as a punishment. When he came out, naked of paint, and with only a vermillion patch here and there, the angry devotee took the obstinate saint to Nino for a new coat of colour.

Hector and he became friends, and used to have long talks. Nino generally offered him a chair. He got to know of Maddaloni's marriage, and congratulated him on it.

"But she has not so much as she ought to have had," replied Hector, crestfallen.

"Ah, but she *will* have, they say," said Nino.

"Meantime, I'm so unlucky at the lottery. What would you suggest, Nino?"

"Because you play at random, you have no chance. Study my numbers."

Hector looked dismayed, and looked to the ground.

"Try praying," said Nino, slyly.

"When my horrible father-in-law does give her money I will be able to repay my friends!" replied Hector.

Nino was fixing an arm on a crucifix, nailing it on where it had broken. He stopped in his work, and looked at Maddaloni.

"Nino," said Hector, "if we could only be certain of a few numbers. The risks are so awful!"

"You would repay very largely?" asked Nino. "Tired of Vacca, are you?"

"Yes," said Hector, "such a life I have! Oh, Nino, think of what it would be to have the keys of the archives, and be able to write on the counterfoils of this book of yours the winning numbers *after* they had been declared! If we could only draw tickets in blank!"

Hector repeated his visits to Nino until a tight little plot was arranged between them. Nino anxious himself to increase his gains and know-

ing that all men are corruptible and mercenary supplied Hector with blank tickets. It was easy enough to demoralise the underkeeper of the archives where once a week, two hours or so before the lottery, the books of counterfoils are deposited. After the numbers had been announced, an anonymous person in Nino's pay by means of duplicate keys found access to the archives, and wrote in the counterfoils corresponding to Maddaloni's blanks the winning numbers. Maddaloni presented the blanks likewise filled up at Nino's office, and was gravely paid out the sum from which Nino himself deducted commission. This was repeated at suitable intervals, Hector promising Nino some solid advantage when at last he would come to his fortune. He came to Rebecca in great spirits one day anxious to explain why he had now money enough, and saying that a relative had died in Calabria, and had left him money. But at this time Rebecca was too ill to think about such things, and she listened to his tale almost with indifference. He was not nursing her, and was out almost the whole day. During his absence Tizio ventured again to approach her. She was too weak even to resent his presence any more, and, besides, he had become wonderfully tender. Maddaloni, busy with his gigantic fraud, had more to think about.

"He is not really worthy of you," said Tizio, venturing to speak to her again. "O, how I hate

him, and love *you* ! Are you angry that I am living here ? Vacca sent me, you know, to watch *him*. What harm did I do in bathing that day last October ? The sea was so lovely and you were in it ! Do you know you have changed me completely. I could leave usury to follow you. I love you. How can you love *him* ? Dear lady, I cannot sleep."

"I hear you at night," said Rebecca ; "you are a dreadful passionate boy. Please go away. I cannot love you, however bitter my life may be. If you love me, do nothing to make it more bitter."

"By our Lady !" exclaimed Tizio, looking at her. "Such a *dolore* !"

"I once thought," said Rebecca, in poetry which her sorrow wrung from her, "that love's cross was completely gay !"

"Ah, the cross, the *cross* !" said Tizio, "our very bodies are the shape of it when our arms are stretched out," and he put his limbs together, and stretched out his arms in the shape of a cross. His lips were quivering.

"You are a strange boy," she said, "I will forgive you if you remain good."

"But shall I not take you away from him ?" he implored. "A crash will come in a few weeks."

"What, in a few weeks ?" asked Rebecca. "Can worse things happen ?"

"Ha!" said Tizio, "those that you have known have been only the toys of tragedy."

"What will happen?" she asked, affrighted.

"How can I tell? All I know is you have made me feel pity for your sufferings. Lady, will you give me one kiss!"

"Away!" said Rebecca, pushing him back.

"O you make me weak like a girl for love of you," he said. "The first day I saw you I said, 'I will light a candle to this saint!'"

"Please go," said Rebecca, "he will come, and find us again. Is that his step! Go! It will only mean misery for me, and I am innocent, innocent!"

"If he dare touch you!" said Tizio, saving himself by going through the door which connected the rooms.

But that night as she was lying awake in bed and Hector was asleep, she heard Tizio moving in the next room. Her heart began to beat faster as she saw a light under the connecting door. What was he going to do? It was two o'clock, and the street was perfectly still. The almost sleepless city takes rest between *two* and *five*, and rises when dawn rises over it like a dream. She heard a door opening on the passage, and presently a hand was on the handle of her own. Was he coming in! She thought she should waken her husband, but fearing everything she remained still, and shut her eyes, simulating

sleep. The door opened softly, and she was conscious of some one entering. It was Tizio. She heard his stifled breathing. It was all she could do to keep her eyes closed. He was standing at the foot of the bed in the clothes he had hurriedly put on. The room was full of moonlight, and Tizio's eyes shone brighter than *it* as he looked at the sleepers. Hector was groaning in his sleep while Rebecca seemed perfectly still. Tizio still stood as if doubtful of his own purpose, but at length came up to where Rebecca lay. She felt his breath warm as he came nearer. She could not stir, and a cold sweat passed over her. Presently, she felt his lips crushing hers, close and full, and out of fear did not desist. But she gave a muffled sob and groan, and then he whispered :

"Let us flee! I have heaps of money. Come with me, and I will save you."

She attempted to get up, and opened her eyes on him, and waved him off. He was at the foot of the bed again, and she saw a gleaming dagger in his hand, which he was lifting in the direction of Hector. She gave a faint shriek, at which her husband awoke calling out who was there. But Tizio retreated in time, shutting the door, while Rebecca sank back almost unconscious on her pillow.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW event was preparing itself in her life, and although it increased her anxieties it diverted her thoughts from the distress of her surroundings. It mattered nothing to her, indeed, what all those who had seen her in the summer might be saying about her ; that, for instance her father had failed, that she had now sunk into poverty from the height of riches, and had hardly a presentable gown to put on, or that she was a wicked woman banished from English society, and that the Maddaloni had made a bad bargain and ought to be pitied. Neither the fiction of those rumours nor the reality of her own chagrins gave her great dispeace, as the feeling of coming motherhood began to invest and almost overwhelm her. They were forgotten, or at least the thought of them was only intermittent. She wondered to whom she might look for help. Her husband said he was not winning money, and he was out all day and half the night. She remained alone in the great palace which was only a prison and vast cell, and hardly looked from her windows at the world outside, which was like a bright amazing dream. She heard Tizio's footsteps in the long corridors and on the stairs, but he remained discreet. Spring would come,

and the woods would be full of cyclamen and violets, but she would not see them. Her Puritanism so curiously transplanted, and which had endured so many strange shocks, really sustained her better than mere audacity and bravery could have done. But she had too much of a woman's longing for disclosure not to write to Lady Babington, and implore her to come.

At that time Mrs. Morpeth was very ill, and Lady Babington was her constant companion. Since Rebecca's flight she had changed utterly, and her husband hardly knew how near her end she happened to be. Lady Babington was her constant nurse, and attempted to relieve her anxieties about Rebecca. As one by one the letters came from Naples, and grew every time more ominous her mother was wracked with apprehension. She dared say nothing to her husband. When at last a letter came announcing her condition, Mrs. Morpeth implored Lady Babington to go on to Naples.

"But I cannot leave you, dear," said Lady Babington.

"Oh, go," said Mrs. Morpeth; "I could not die in peace unless you went."

It was enough, and Lady Babington prepared to leave, though she hardly expected to see her friend again.

"Say nothing to my husband," said Mrs. Morpeth; "just go. God will repay you!"

Lady Babington consulted Roland.

"If anything dreadful happens," he said, "wire for me. I was to get leave in spring anyway. Lady Middlemass is going too."

"Lady Middlemass! Frank, don't take her."

"I promised," said Roland. "Will you write me?"

"Yes," she said, "and when I am away look after Mrs. Morpeth. Tell her husband how really ill she is. And listen, Frank, take the advice of an old woman who couldn't be jealous. Don't let Lady Middlemass run away with you. Now that she's a widow—I suppose it's quite certain that poor Middlemass is drowned—she'll be dangerous. She's *not* the girl for you. Now listen to Mother Babington."

"All right, Lady Babington," said Roland, smiling, "I only promised to take her to Naples. The truth is I promised Rebecca to go and see her long before the—the elopement. Her father keeps on saying he'll never forgive, but I'll bring the old boy round."

Events now advanced rapidly. Rebecca had news that Lady Babington was coming, and she began to dream of her knock at the door. She felt that perhaps she might not live to see her. And an irresistible longing to go home possessed her. She had hardly a visitor except Tizio, who brought her fruit and ice. Her sufferings had evidently altered his mood, and he behaved more

like a brother. She had never spoken to him about the dreadful night when he had crept into the room. He was a mixture of passion and tenderness. She dreaded him, and warned Hector to beware of him. All her thoughts and feelings were in confusion. She hardly heard Vacca when he came in to say, "Ha, ha, how is the brave little motherling?" She only felt that her pleasure had become a sore altar on which her body had been laid to be burnt. There, in the city of the sun, she, who had come as a laughing bride, had been taught that our pleasures are chasms and pits. Her few moments of bewildering love had certainly given her a feeling of life's magnificence. But what endless tollgates and custom-bars must be passed on the road to all wisdom, love's triumphs, battles, bugles being part of the glamour of the way! Rebecca had had enough magnificence, because she had behaved finely even at the very hour of love's lost leadership. Amid all the repetition and emphasis of her pain she knew that she had remained good. And that delicate and pardonable Pharisaism really sustained her, even after love had done his work upon her quickly like a storm. It was enough, she was now entering all love's martyrdom, prepared for its pain. In the whole history of human emotion, which is the only history worth reading, there can be nothing so wonderful as this martyrdom of maternity into

which enter feelings so personal and yet so devotional as the woman struggles for her own life and for her child's. And it was not to be wondered at if Rebecca, as she looked at the stained crucifix opposite, accepted its strange symbolism and fled for refuge under the ribs of her God, or allowed her thoughts to travel back to the days, not so long ago, when her mother took her to the little Church of the Redeemer where she was taught the mysterious truth that God is a Cross. Here was love coming back to her like the figure of an avenger for her pleasure, embracing her godlessly now with great arms of pain.

Tizio was softened by the sight of her strange martyrdom, far from her friends. Her very resistance of him seemed to intensify her influence over him. She knew by his demeanour that some change had taken place, and she allowed him to come to her bedside.

"Forgive me," he said in the sudden outburst of a Southern heart, "forgive me it all. I love you—yet differently. You are as pure as the snow on the Apennines in winter! Go, get something," he cried to the old woman who tottered about Rebecca's bed muttering unintelligible words, "nurse her, do you hear?"

At that moment Maddaloni came in, but he was in a conciliatory mood to Tizio, and did not seem to resist his presence. It was a Saturday, and he announced radiantly, that he had

been lucky at the lottery, while Tizio's face darkened.

"Go you!" he said; "see your wife. It's been a pretty lottery for *her*."

"How is she?" asked Hector going up to the bed; "why is she taken this way? Other women go about to the last hour. I thought all these English were strong!"

Then he turned, and left, while Tizio wondered why he showed no jealousy any more. It was a joy to Tizio to go messages for her.

Rebecca even grew communicative, and told him that an English lady was coming to see her, and asked him to meet her at the station. Her naïve trust in face of all she had suffered conquered and transmuted him.

He went to the station to meet Lady Babington, and recognised her from Rebecca's description. She loved Rebecca, and eagerly asked news. When she arrived at Maddaloni palace, she received an extraordinary shock. As she ascended the great unwashed staircase and passed through the empty lobbies she wondered if she had been taken to the wrong place, and looked suspiciously at Tizio.

"It's all right," said Tizio, who had guessed her thought. "I'll bring you to where she is."

The emptiness and squalor impressed Lady Babington, but not until she saw Rebecca were her worst fears realised. The room was dark-

ened because the sun was strong, but there was enough light to see Rebecca's misery.

"Rebecca!" exclaimed Lady Babington, leaning over her, and kissing her.

"Yes. Yes! This is it," said Rebecca. "It might have been worse. Say nothing, dear Lady Babington. How's mamma?"

"Very, very ill. My dear child," sobbed Lady Babington, "almost as ill as yourself, but you're young, and she—she's broken-hearted. Rebecca, what—what is this?"

"Maddaloni palace, dear Lady Babington," said Rebecca. "Am I brave? How's father?"

"He's been silent ever since," said Lady Babington, trying to realise that this was really Rebecca.

She looked round the vast wretched room, wondering what Frank Roland and Lady Middlemass would think when they arrived. At a glance she saw what had happened better than if Rebecca had answered a hundred questions. Rebecca heaving great sobs thanked her for having come.

"Frank Roland is coming out quite shortly, and Lady Middlemass," said Lady Babington.

"I don't wish to see Lady Middlemass at least," said Rebecca. "That would be awful."

"She's a widow now, you know," said Lady Babington.

"Is Frank going to marry her?" asked Re-

becca; "or are they married? Is it their honeymoon?"

"Every one says it will be that," replied Lady Babington, "but I don't believe it. At any rate, you're too weak to talk so much. Where's—your husband?"

Rebecca shook her head.

"But he is not good to you? What has happened? Becky, Becky, is it possible!"

"I have lost everything, God and everything," said Rebecca. "Will you stay just a little till—till it happens. I have nothing to offer you—nothing. We are paupers."

"Hush, dear."

"What are they all saying about me?"

"Oh, there was only a vague rumour that you were not happy."

"And Lady Middlemass is coming out to see the truth for herself?"

"Oh, she's not quite as bad as that, perhaps."

"I could never go back now," said Rebecca. "I could not face father."

"But what are you to do? How can it last, and how are you living?"

"He's making money by gambling, I think," said Rebecca. "It's enough to make me wish to die."

"Hush, dear. I will stay with you," said Lady Babington.

But, indeed, her visit of mercy was suddenly

cut short, and she went home before little Reynold was born. One day as she was sitting by Rebecca's bedside, talking of old days, Tizio came in with a telegram. It was to Lady Babington from Mr. Morpeth, urging her to come at once as Mrs. Morpeth was seriously ill. No mention was made of Rebecca. Lady Babington looked at her as if to ask what she should do.

"How can I leave you?" she said.

"Go," said Rebecca. "It is cruel to send you about like this, dear Lady Babington. But poor mamma! If she's dying! You're the only one father would have. It was selfish of me to ask you to come. I should be there!"

"Child, how can I leave you in this state?" asked Lady Babington.

"Send some one," said Rebecca. "Frank——"

"Frank Roland is sure to come. He may have started, but what can a man do?"

When Lady Babington gave a final kiss to Rebecca she could hardly extricate herself from the girl's arms. At length Rebecca let her go, and turned her face to the wall.

"I shall come out again," said Lady Babington.

"I shall be dead," said Rebecca, while Lady Babington softly shut the door.

Little Reynold was born before even Roland and Lady Middlemass arrived. The birth was precipitated by the shock Rebecca had received

on the day before it happened, for it was on that day that she had seen Hector arrested in her very presence, handcuffed, and taken to prison. He and Nino had at last been discovered, and news of the fraud filled the piazzas and streets. A crowd had assembled at the Maddaloni palace to see the prisoner led away. There had never been so audacious a forgery. It was a State treason, and the penalty was banishment for life in one of the convict settlements. When Rebecca saw her room suddenly invaded by gendarmes bearing a warrant, her fortitude at last gave away. The "Maddaloni" attempted to escape through Tizio's door, but he was caught in time. He turned to Rebecca with a cry, asking her to come to him with their child. She was in a state of consternation, and asked what it all meant.

The "Maddaloni" confessed his crime, saying he was driven to it by their poverty.

"What crime!" called Rebecca, unable to understand. But he was carried away before he had time to answer, and it was from Tizio's lips that she first heard what had happened.

"You will never see him again," said Tizio, "unless you are compelled to go to the trial. They may even arrest you as an accomplice. I shall help you to escape. Will you come with me? You know I love you. Come with me. We shall never set our feet in Naples again!"

"Oh God, I am alone!" she said.

"Come with me," urged Tizio, "and be my wife. I will do everything for you."

She sank back helpless and prostrated. Presently Vacca came in exclaiming, "Ha, bride, what is this? what is this? I will lose all, will I? The State will now seize all his property, and I shall get nothing for my loans!" Rebecca waved him off. Tizio turned to him whispering:

"Leave her. She's at the birth. God, God, leave her!"

Vacca, cursing and swearing, went about the palace to see what he could seize. "Sweet Mary, my bond!" he cried like a child desperate over a broken toy. He came back to the room, and said, "Bride, you can escape it, if you will write me a promise for payment. We shall get you away, and save you infinite trouble. They will seize you yet, I believe they are coming back with a new warrant. They may respect you in the state you are, but sooner or later you would have to give evidence. Who knows, he may get an advocate to convict *you*? Come, sign me a paper. I shall get you off in time, in a boat, bride, with Tizio, to Gaeta perhaps, and then train over the frontier. Eh, bride!"

"Oh, oh!" sobbed Rebecca, "leave me—leave me."

But Roland was almost at the door, and he

and his aunt and Lady Middlemass arrived in the very midst of the confusion and collapse. They arrived two or three hours after the birth, little expecting what they saw. On the way out, as they were sailing up the Mediterranean, Lady Middlemass, whose Tom had now gone under the waves as every one believed, had been cutting jokes at Rebecca's expense, and had been asking Roland what interest he had in another man's wife. The unmarried Wallers felt sure that the voyage would develop into a honeymoon, but they were thankful that Aunt Luckily was of the party in order that some sort of respectability might be maintained.

"What will you do, Captain Roland, when you see Rebecca?" asked Lady Middlemass, who was dressed in widow's weeds. "Her husband will be quite jealous, you know. You will be so taken up with her that you will forget all about me. I'm afraid I won't stand it, and I'm going out at Marseilles."

"No, no," said Roland. "Really?"

"But oh yes," said Lady Middlemass; "it's to be Marseilles."

"Well, of course," replied Roland. "I'll have to come with you. I could hardly let you go alone."

"I should think not, you would at least have to see me into the train, and then you might lose the steamer."

"But we've all got tickets for Naples," said Roland.

"Oh, you mercenary man!"

Roland said he would go to ask his aunt what she wished to do. When he came on deck again with his aunt, who was protesting that Lady Middlemass was a selfish woman, Roland, who had nothing of the diplomatist's face, openly displayed his vexation.

"Now come, Aunt Luckly," said Lady Middlemass, arranging a chair for her, "do you know I've found your nephew out. I never thought of it before, but he's wishing to go to Naples to see another man's wife. Isn't it shocking? I propose that we go out at Marseilles and take him home."

"Well," said Aunt Luckly with decision, "*I* am going to Naples, and I don't see how Frank can leave *me*."

"I can't really leave my aunt, you know," said Roland, turning to Lady Middlemass, who immediately burst out laughing, and called him a sweet nephew.

"Now I always say," she replied, "that people should travel alone. If they go with their friends they generally come home single."

"*I* am going to Naples," repeated Aunt Luckly with emphasis.

"I shall see you into the train at Marseilles then," said Roland innocently, and with an air

so passionless that Lady Middlemass almost cried.

"Thanks, monsieur, thanks, so good of you," she cried. "But I've changed my mind suddenly. *I* am going to Naples too! Wasn't it wicked of me to play this joke on you?"

"It's settled then," said Roland.

They arrived in the nick of time when Rebecca was being urged one way by Tizio and another way by Vacca, and was overwhelmed by the birth. Vacca and Tizio had kept at the proper distance until little Reynold was born, but since she showed signs of vigour and returning strength, little dreamed of two days before, they sent messages asking her if she wished to save herself and her child by flight. Vacca, still with an eye to his own interests, came offering money, while Tizio came to offer himself. It was a few moments after they had left her, pathetic in her sudden maternity, that she heard Roland's voice in the passage. His aunt and Lady Middlemass came into the room which was darkened to hide the sun. They had been astonished at the extraordinary appearance of the huge palace, the unwashed stairs, the cobwebs hanging from the walls and the hundred signs of poverty and decay which met their eyes. Roland remained outside speaking to Tizio, and asking eager questions. Lady Middlemass went up to Rebecca's bedside and kissed her, saying that she was sur-

prised to hear the news of the birth. Rebecca was nursing her child. Lady Middlemass looked round the room wondering at the desolate appearance of everything.

"I was so sorry to hear of your husband's death," said Rebecca to Lady Middlemass.

"Oh, yes," she said musing, "I've had a dreadfully bitter time, but the voyage has done me good. This is Captain Roland's aunt," she said.

"Is he here?" asked Rebecca. "I am better. How are you all at home?"

Lady Middlemass at a glance discovered the meaning of the silence regarding Rebecca's marriage. Every sign that met her eyes conveyed the impression of some vast failure and mistake.

"Can we do anything for you, dear?" said Aunt Luckily.

"No," said Rebecca, "are you to be long here?"

"We start to-morrow, and are going to Pompeii to-day, you know," replied Lady Middlemass. "Rebecca, what a curious old house,—rather dismal."

"Lady Babington was here," said Rebecca. "She must have got home by this time. Do you know how mamma is?"

"Did they not write to tell you how ill she was?"

"Yes," said Rebecca; "is she better?"

"I have heard nothing," replied Lady Middlemass. "Where is your husband, dear?"

"Where? Oh—oh, he's—away. I am tired and could sleep."

Lady Middlemass and Aunt Luckly moved from the bed to the window and began to whisper.

"What a fine old palace! Rather empty, you know," said Lady Middlemass. "But I suppose in the Middle Ages there were fewer tables and chairs in the world than we have now, and evidently no carpets!"

"This is a curious palace," said Aunt Luckly.

"Could I see Captain Roland?" cried Rebecca.

"To be sure," said Aunt Luckly, while Lady Middlemass whispered that if they were to see Pompeii that day they would have to start at once. Aunt Luckly shook her head, saying that very likely Frank would put it off.

"It is strange," whispered Lady Middlemass, "that her husband is not here."

"Rebecca, dear. Your husband—" she began.

"Please do not mention his name," said Rebecca.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Lady Middlemass.

"I am tired—" said Rebecca.

Lady Middlemass looked surprised, and said she would go to Roland, who by this time had had the whole tale from Tizio. He was walking up and down the corridors trying to imagine how

Rebecca had been able to live in such a curious empty place, which had hardly a vestige of domestic comfort. On the terrace above the courtyard he saw Tizio sitting on the balustrade, slim and pale and as if in a dream. Roland came out to him.

"Do you speak English?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tizio. "You are of the party that have come to see the Countess di Rosa?"

"The Countess Maddaloni."

"Ah yes, that's not her name, however."

Roland looked confused, but Tizio continued. "There's an heir now, but I don't know what he's heir of except perhaps his mother's beauty, if even she has that left."

"Really, an heir?" repeated Roland. "When did it happen?"

"A few hours ago, and not twenty-four hours after its father had been arrested and put in prison."

Roland could hardly believe his ears.

"Do you love her?" asked Tizio.

"By Gad, yes," said Roland.

"Then take her away. She may go with you. She won't with me, but, sweet Mary, I love her as much as you."

"Speak, quick, what's happened?" asked Roland, impatiently.

"Her husband is in prison on a charge of forgery. He'll be exported for life. Such a life

she's had! Look, they may arrest *her*. Vacca and I—Vacca is her father's agent."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Roland. "Quick."

"Well, we protested, but she'll perhaps be summoned to give evidence, and no one knows how the case might go. It might be turned against her. And the birth came in the midst of it all! She was crying out in Italian Redentore which means Redeemer," said Tizio, with his eyes shining like silver.

"Oh, I know," said Roland. "It's the name of the church her mother used to take her to. Good God, go on."

"We explained everything to the police, that she was an Englishwoman, that she married against her father's will and so on, and that she was innocent. They left her because of the state she was in, but they may detain her yet. I've loved her. She'll never love me. I've loved her for months and months, but it's no use. I resign her, take her away. Go to Gæsta in a boat, and flee to England. She'll never see her wretched husband again."

Roland was hurrying to the room when he met Lady Middlemass in the corridor. Lady Middlemass seemed to wear a changed expression, and looked at him very acutely as he came excitedly along.

"Have you heard? Have you heard?" he asked.

"Why, yes, she's had a child. I didn't know *you* were so interested in that," replied Lady Middlemass. "It appears to me to be a strange place she's in, and that something frightful has happened. She won't talk about her husband."

"He's in prison," said Roland. "I've been told everything this minute."

"In prison," cried Lady Middlemass.

"Yes, on a charge of forgery, and they say Rebecca might be seized. I'll take her away."

"*You* take her away? What are you thinking about? We're going to Pompeii."

"You can go, Lady Middlemass," said Roland. "I can't."

"What have *you* to do with her?" asked Lady Middlemass, while a red spot burned on her cheek.

"I'll deliver her," said Roland.

"She's delivered already," replied Lady Middlemass, with extraordinary bitterness. "I'm astonished at you, Captain Roland."

"Lady Middlemass, you are happy, you have everything, she has nothing. She has made a frightful mistake. Nobody knows what she has suffered. She is your countrywoman, and you can't abandon her."

"You're abandoning me, monsieur," she replied, "to do a very strange thing. Are you going to kidnap a man's wife when he's in prison? Cradle and all!"

"Those blackguards will involve her in the crime."

"And how do you know she might not be?" asked Lady Middlemass. "What right have *you* to interfere? I shall have nothing to do with it."

Her voice rose higher as she looked at him, ill-concealing her passion. Tizio was standing near watching her energy, and she turned to look at him. She was struck by his pallor and his look of curiosity. She turned to look at him again, and then disappeared down the great stair, without a word to Roland.

"I can't help it," he muttered, as he went along to Rebecca's door which Tizio pointed out to him.

His aunt opened it, and he came in. When he came up to the bed Rebecca clutched his hand, while the tears were rolling from her eyes as she whispered, "I knew your step, Frank."

"Rebecca!" he whispered back, as his own eyes filled at that sight of all love's desolation. "We have come to take you away just in time. We shall carry you. Can you rise? To-night?"

"And my child," she said.

"I know everything," said Roland. "My aunt is with me. She shall be kind to you."

"He's in prison. He stole money or did something dreadful. But perhaps they're deceiving

me. That camorra! But that's not the worst. It's the awful burglary in my soul!"

"Rebecca!" he exclaimed, as she pulled him towards her in her woman's need for one brother's kiss of consolation.

"Take me," she said, "take me home to my mother and—the little—Church of the Redeemer."

BOOK III
REBECCA AND ROLAND

CHAPTER I

It was not possible to remove Rebecca for ten days, and Vacca suspected that her departure might be prevented altogether. Nevertheless she escaped. About three o'clock one morning a small craft might have been seen sailing out of the Bay of Naples toward Gæta. It contained Rebecca with her child, and Roland and his aunt. Tizio was at the rudder, and the boat was going swiftly before the east wind. Tizio, who had arranged everything, knew from what point to start so as to evade the gendarmes. The Custom House guards on the beach saw nothing unusual in a party starting in the early morning, since it is common for boats to leave Naples for the islands long before sunrise. It was Tizio's own boat, and he knew how to manage her, and like a good steersman, made her shy at the waves. A strong, dry east wind (*scirocco levante*) was blowing, making the sea grey, and it was threatening to blow stronger, much to Aunt Luckly's fear and disgust. "Rebecca, dear, are we all going to be drowned!" she exclaimed. They consoled her as best they could, and Roland, who was in great spirits, asked her to cheer up. She begged them to put her on shore, and at every lurch of the

boat, gave a subdued shriek. But they were already outside the bay, and were passing Ischia, isle of the fiery heart and of the hot red glory of vines. The morning, all marigold, was breaking over the sea, although far out it was still grey and dark and lonely, without a ray, as if oppressed by long arrears of night. But the morning star was holding the sky like an outpost of the sun, and soon the pale roof would be saffron and red. Rebecca looked back to Naples, City of Dawn and Bride of the Morning, that sits like old Tyre or great Sidon by the sea, waiting for ships. Starbeam and plenilune and dark had given way before the exterminating fire of the sun coming up, as Campanella says, like the living statue of God (*statua viva di Dio*). Ah, this was a day, not to flee, but to stay lingering about those clear horizons. Here are the springs of mystery, when the world seems full of God at the moment He gives us the morning star. Unbridled riches of earth and heaven, light which seems supernatural, and the sea whose foundations are sapphires; the very air hung diaphanous like an invisible temple of the sun; gleaming frontiers of stars, azure shores and the very place of sunbeams; these are thy gifts, O Midland Sea, these, and the very place of dreams!

Rebecca looked back to the strange city fading from her eyes. Never would she forget that dawn on the Mediterranean. The wind was

carrying her westward, but she still looked back. What mysterious link connected her own delicate and fragile Puritanism with those old golden dwellings of Astarte? Here was the scenery of her own love, and she had loved vehemently, blindly, heedlessly, as all lovers and children of Astarte must. She had calculated nothing, she had trusted everything, and the catastrophe still found her unashamed. Did she love him? Did she pity him weakened by his poverty, and made ludicrous by his fraud? Would she throw the idol completely away as belonging to her no more? Would she renounce him as a pagan, an impostor, an unbeliever spending his trivial and degraded day as a sort of caricature of what a human life should be? And where was *she* going? Was it to England and to her father, from whom no forgiveness could ever be asked? Her love, which had been a great passion, pathetic in the very completeness of its folly and sincerity, would become the stock-in-trade of gossiping mouths, to be judged not as a piece of mistaken idealism, but simply as a blunder of calculation. What sort of pity could she expect from people who had never loved at all, or who had loved carefully and correctly, and had calculated all issues and made good all ways of escape? What was she to subsist on? Would she ever beg from her father? What could Roland do for her? Finally, was she not a coward in having run

away from her fallen husband: and was this not precisely the first act she had committed of which she should be ashamed? Those were the questions which urged themselves upon her in a confused mass as she was conscious of the boat's smooth motion over the waves, her child's cries, and the disappearing scenery of the place of her brief dream. And still she looked eastward.

In the hurry of their departure she had not stopped to ask what part Tizio meant to play in the future. And when she now saw him sitting stealthily at the rudder, dressed as if prepared for a long journey, and with a certain amount of luggage of his own in the boat, she felt him somehow as an avenging presence to be with her for ever. He had asked Roland if he knew how to steer, and when Roland said yes, he resigned the rudder to him. Tizio then unpacked his guitar, and played and sang the "Addio, Napoli" to cheer them up. The city had now passed out of sight, and only Vesuvius was seen towering above it with a faint cloud of smoke. Tizio was singing with all the passion of a Neapolitan, while Rebecca kept asking herself what he was doing there at all. He had moved from the seat next her at the rudder, up to the bow. When every one began to move, as they changed places, Aunt Lucky thought it was a signal for a general overturning of the boat, and prepared for the end.

But Tizio was now comfortably settled at the bow, where he could manage the jib and give directions to Roland how best to make for Gæta. They would reach it at night. Rebecca had been silent for a long time, but now she felt she must speak. She knew that Tizio's eyes must be on her, therefore she looked seldom his way. He cried down from the bow to ask if they were hungry, because he had brought provisions. No one was hungry, however, so he went on with his thrumming again. With the exception of Roland he was the gayest in the boat, and he smiled to Rebecca though he received no smile in return. She looked back. Naples was long out of sight, and even Vesuvius was disappearing. She felt it awkward that Tizio understood English, because she wished to speak about him to Roland, and warn Roland. Had she not been so agitated she would have certainly been unable to keep from smiling at Aunt Luckly, whose mind seemed made up that they were all on their way to their doom. But Rebecca perhaps felt the same thing, though she put another meaning into it. She was anxious to know if Tizio was going to accompany them further than Gæta. It had been extraordinarily generous of him to run all those risks on her account, but she could hardly believe in his disinterestedness. What purpose had this subtle boy in view? At starting he had expressed surprise that Lady Middlemass was

not with them. He had thought that Lady Middlemass was Roland's wife, because, as he said, "She rated you so soundly!" But when he heard that it was not so, his face darkened and he looked angrily at Roland. Rebecca had seen it, and had guessed everything. But she had been too anxious to get away to waste time by questioning the advisability of accepting Tizio as their guide. She had thought that it was a benevolent scheme of Vacca at the last moment for the purpose of propitiating her father in case of a final reconciliation. And indeed, this was precisely what it was. Vacca, fearing to forfeit Mr. Morpeth's favour if ever it came to the banker's ears that he had had a hand in persecuting Rebecca, or in endeavouring to extort money from her, hurriedly ordered Tizio to get the party safely away and accompany them to London, for the purpose of demonstrating to the old fox at Pont Street that it was to his Neapolitan agent her safety was due. He had written a long letter which Tizio was carrying with him, and which he was to present as soon as he arrived. In this letter Vacca described the collapse of the "Maddaloni," and he pointed out that every one had been his dupe, and that particularly Vacca had personally lost a large sum by an indiscreet loan. He stated that he had deposed already before the judge the innocence of the wife in the charge of fraud and state treason which was

being prepared against the husband, and that in the proceedings that would ensue he would further safeguard the fair name of Morpeth. Finally, he showed how he had offered to assist Rebecca in the deplorable situation in which her marriage had placed her, and that he had been the means of her escape to her native land, where he hoped she would be restored to her father's affection, pending the result of the trial. Tizio had said nothing of this to Rebecca. He was too glad to have the opportunity of "seeing her home," although his sharp eyes soon detected that Roland was considering that privilege to be exclusively his own. He almost regretted the outburst of generosity in which he had asked Roland if he loved her, and had suggested to him coöperation in her escape. But it was at least a satisfaction to know that the whole party was indebted for their safety to himself. Had it not been for him they would doubtless have been detained in their effort to leave Naples in the ordinary way. At least there had been a chance of it. But if they arrived safely at Gæta, left their boat, and took train over the frontier, all the plot would be complete. Besides, Tizio had the satisfaction to know that he would be allowed to remain some time in London, because Vacca had other work for him to do. He vowed that he would spend half the nights under Rebecca's window. Roland, who was he? Tizio

would find that out in time. Meantime, he sang "Addio Napoli" gaily enough.

But Rebecca felt at last impelled to speak.

"Frank," she said, "put me ashore! I am a coward, I should have stayed with him. My place is at the prison door to wait for him. Let me go. Let me go. How can I go home? Aunt Luckily, you will come ashore with me?"

"Yes, dear; at once," exclaimed Aunt Luckily, while Roland could hardly believe his ears, and Tizio sat with his ears alert, and determined at all hazards to prevent return. He saw by Roland's look that for him, too, it was all a personal question. Surely two men would succeed in compelling two women and a baby!

"Rebecca," said Roland—"Ah, he calls her 'Rebecca!'" thought Tizio—"Rebecca, what do you mean? You asked to be taken away."

"Yes, yes, I was selfish, selfish to you and to him. I'm all confused! Frank, what could I do at home. Will there be one woman to pity me?"

"Yes, Lady Babington," said Roland.

"One against a hundred. And my father!"

"I," broke in Tizio, jumping over the seats to come near them, while the boat lurched and Aunt Luckily shrieked, "I have got a letter for your father."

"*You* coming to London!" exclaimed Rebecca.

"Why, yes," said Tizio, smiling, "why not?"

"Frank, my life is a maze. What am I to do? My child! My broken hopes!" cried Rebecca, bitterly, and covered her face.

"Let us get in, dear," said Aunt Luckily, "at that headland there."

"Impossible," said Tizio and Roland, almost simultaneously.

"I ought to be waiting for him," she sobbed. "Let me go back. I was wrong to ask you to take me away. For better or worse I took him, and I should remain with him in prison or out of it."

"Rebecca, it would be monstrous."

"Wheel the boat, Frank."

Tizio, however, signed to him to keep on their course, which he did, trying all the time to urge Rebecca to desist.

"Of all dreadful voyages, this is the most dreadful," sobbed Aunt Luckily; "we shall certainly be drowned! And an unbaptised infant on board!"

"Plenty of water to baptise it!" exclaimed Roland, trying to cheer them up, and even Rebecca smiled.

Nursing her child with great difficulty, she surrendered to the stronger will of Roland, and they held on their course.

The wind blew steadily all day, and carried them to Gæta sooner than they expected. Aunt

Luckly was surprised to find herself safe on dry land again. Tizio managed everything. Rebecca thanked him for all he had done, and begged him not to follow them; but he said that he had business in London, and might as well accompany them home. He knew Gæta well, and gave his boat in charge of a fisherman. Roland gave him money to buy tickets. Tizio was evidently now an indispensable evil. He even gave his arm to Roland's aunt and pushed her into a first-class carriage. Instincts of economy made him choose a third-class for himself, and for the moment he surrendered Rebecca to Roland. It would take some time, he thought, to find out what precisely were the relations between those two. Perhaps Roland's advent had been all arranged, and was only the recommencement of an old intrigue? But Tizio thought not. He at least knew enough of Rebecca to feel sure that, given her circumstances, Roland would find as much difficulty in approaching her as he had himself found. If not, she was more a hypocrite than he had supposed. As long as she was the wife of "Maddaloni," it looked as if she meant to remain loyal. She had taken her marriage as a tremendous solemnity made sacred by the grandeur of her passion and devotion. This Tizio wondered at; but he knew too well that a man like "Maddaloni" would not long survive Italian prison life. There was every chance that he would get into

the hands of the real camorra there, and doubtless it would be an end of him. And then? Rebecca would be free. Was it not possible that she might then turn in gratitude to the boy who had done so much for her, displayed such a continuity of passion for her, saved her from the ambiguous processes of an Italian court of justice, and rescued her from a false conviction? She was still a girl, and all love's years were before her. He had always been lucky and, indeed, it was marvellous that Vacca had allowed him to come away with the only woman who had ever fired his heart. The presence of this Roland doubtless annoyed him. Was he in the game, too? He was longing to get to London to discover who he was. Yet he could sit comfortably enough in his third-class compartment, for he knew that an old lady accompanied Roland and Rebecca to prevent any indiscretions. Besides, Rebecca's cry to get back to Naples had been obviously sincere, and it had made Tizio marvel at the constancy of woman. As they hurried past mile after mile, he could think only of Rebecca, and of the folly of "Maddaloni," who had not known how to keep her. But fortune was going to smile upon *him*. Doubtless, he would often be at Pont Street on bank business, and he would have an opportunity of seeing her. He would ingratiate himself with her father, who had taken kindly to him before, and doubtless remembered him. He

had brought with him a great deal of the money he had saved and won in all sorts of ways by help of Vacca, and sometimes at Vacca's expense ! He was actually rich, and decided to set about buying shares in the Morpeth bank. Life was all before him. He had felt attracted to London, where things were done on a large scale. Naples was a village in comparison, and a place of beggars and small dealers. He hoped finally to break with Vacca. Perhaps he might even be transferred into the actual Morpeth bank, and become the banker's right-hand man ! And then all the future would be his. He was now almost sorry that he had ever shown any violence of love to Rebecca. What would he not give to make her forget that morning bathe and midnight kiss ! But she had called him a boy. She would forgive him. She knew their southern madness and precocity of love. She would see really what he was worth once he had reconciled her to her father, as he hoped to do. What a woman to win !

And certainly, during the journey home, Rebecca had as much to think of as Tizio. It was not until they were in the train that Roland had an opportunity of asking who he was. Rebecca told him that Tizio was the most extraordinary person she had ever met. She said frankly that she did not understand him. She made no reference to the violence of his passion. She only

said he was an unbridled boy with great capacity of evil, but that, on the whole, she had reason to be grateful to him. What he was going to do in London she did not know, but his perpetual object of hate and contempt was her husband. Roland admitted that he could make nothing of him either, but said he looked like an acute little rogue. Aunt Luckily, however, took his side, and said he was gallant. He was then dismissed from their thoughts. All the way home Rebecca knew that Roland was wishing to ask her how she had fared all these months, but even though he had trespassed on his own delicacy, which was not likely, Rebecca never would have given him much enlightenment. Henceforward it was to be sealed lips for her. Only one thing she did venture to say, which was, "I expected something different. I did not think my life was going to be so poor!" But it was chiefly the future that was harrassing her. What *could* she do? It was a strange home-coming, and her woman's instincts made her feel the delicacy of a situation to which Roland in his great dumb good humour seemed utterly blind. She was glad that Aunt Luckily was with them. The name of Lady Middlemass was hardly mentioned, but Rebecca felt sure that now every one at home knew the ridiculous thing her marriage had been. As she drew nearer England she felt she would rather go anywhere else. What was

to become of her? It was clear that Miss Luckly was as conscious of the peculiarity of the situation as Rebecca. When Rebecca asked Roland where she was to go, and he replied, laughing,—“Why, you will stay with us until we see how matters stand at Pont Street, I have more than six rooms, you know,”—she said the thing was impossible. Miss Luckly agreed with her, and it became too evident to Rebecca that the old lady was shocked at the proposal. “Under the circumstances, Frank!” she said, and shook her head. “I can’t drive to Pont Street,” said Rebecca. “It would be too cruel. I’ll go to Lady Babington.” Roland seemed disappointed, but acquiesced, while Miss Luckly was the first to approve. This humiliation of her home-coming put Rebecca into tears again. Never was a prodigal so peculiarly and poignantly abashed. She feared all the women. How could she show her face to Mrs. Cayley, the unmarried Wallers, Lady Middlemass, and all that set? She felt sure, indeed, that Lady Babington must have kept silent on what she had seen. Old Lady Babington was too good and true even to have said anything to Rebecca’s mother. But Lady Middlemass must have already spread a hundred rumours, although, perhaps, the very completeness of the disaster would silence all scandal.

When they arrived at Victoria she had hardly the courage to leave the train. Tizio came along

to help them out. He said he could see them home before he went to lodgings at Hatton Gardens. Rebecca felt that she was arriving like a beggar. She had not even a nurse to attend to her child. She had to depend on Roland for everything. Tizio was surprised to hear that the cabman was to drive to Palace Gate instead of to Pont Street. Lady Babington lived at Palace Gate, and Rebecca was going to take her un-awares. But she felt that as soon as she could she would escape back to Naples to her duty and her poverty. Tizio sprang up on the box-seat, thinking a hundred thoughts. When they stopped at Palace Gate the house was found to be shut up. Lady Babington was evidently out of town. Roland urged her to agree to his original suggestion, and come to Sloane Street. He said he would see her father next day and all would be right. She gave her consent reluctantly, conscious that Miss Luckly was angry. Tizio was still more surprised to hear the new address, but gave it to the cabman, and jumped up beside him again. When, at length, they reached it and the luggage had been carried up to Roland's quarters, he asked the servant hurriedly, whose house it was. When he heard it was Roland's, a ghastly smile passed across his face. He wished them all coldly good night. They did not ask him in. Rebecca was too exhausted even to thank him, and passed in with-

out a word. Roland stood to say good night. Tizio with eyes raging and shining, took Roland's hand, and gripped it very tightly, almost twisting it, to Roland's surprise, and disappeared down the stair muttering words which Roland could not understand.

CHAPTER II

LADY MIDDLEMASS never drove down Sloane Street without looking at Roland's windows. Lady Middlemass drove down Sloane Street very often, so that when the footman received the usual order almost every day in the week, he and the coachman exchanged winks. And it must have been a ready tact that made the coachman when he was passing Roland's quarters rein in the horses, but not so obtrusively as to make Lady Middlemass too conscious of his sympathy and penetration. It will be remembered that she had left Naples in a hurry and a rage, and she had been in a rage and a hurry ever since. She came home extremely vexed with herself for having lost her temper, and the next few days were doubtless the most vexatious of all her life. She was wondering what Roland would be thinking of her. She felt that now he thoroughly knew her. And it was in vain that she tried to console herself with the belief that he too had behaved rather unchivalrously. He had abandoned her rather shockingly. Knowing him as she did, however, it was impossible to believe that he had gone out to Naples for the special purpose of an intrigue. Such an idea was absurd, for the good reason that if such had been

his purpose he would have gone out alone and hurriedly and in secret. Yet his excitement had been very remarkable. She had seen him flush and burn as he had never done before. For all she knew, Rebecca's misfortune might incite him to make love to her as he never would do in sober England. But there in Naples anything was possible. His love which had been kept smouldering so long, like a fagot, might flare up at last. Since she had come home Lady Middlemass had driven down Sloane Street often twice a day, and when she perceived that the shutters were still on the windows and that there were no signs of his return, she felt sick and ill. She was ready to sacrifice a great deal of her pride, and she thought of writing to him to explain herself. She now saw that she could not have done a worse thing than run away. She would appear a monster in his eyes, for she had spoken harshly of Rebecca and cruelly abandoned her at a moment when every woman becomes a friend to another. And she had given him an opportunity of doing a service which no woman, and least of all a woman like Rebecca, could ever forget. A man who saves a woman must always win her love in some sort of way, especially if her husband is a scoundrel and happens to be in prison. Roland might be like any other man, said Lady Middlemass. He would snatch at his opportunity. She had seen the look of frightful

earnestness in his face, and had taken it as a sign of his passion. What a romance it was going to be! As for Rebecca, who had the reputation of being such a good, true woman, would she not turn out to be just like any of her sisters who, when one love has perished within them, take refuge in another?

Unable to resist the temptation of allowing some other one to share the news, Lady Middlemass drove to Mrs. Cayley's, but when Mrs. Cayley heard it, she said she was not in the least astonished. Lady Middlemass referred as little as possible to the part which Roland had played. She dwelt, rather, on the fiasco of Rebecca's marriage, about which they all had had suspicions long ago.

"What, back already!" Mrs. Cayley had said at first. "I saw your horses and couldn't believe my eyes. Do tell me now, everything. At last we'll have something definite."

Lady Middlemass described with sufficient vividness the condition in which she had found Rebecca.

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed Mrs. Cayley, "I said so from the beginning, you remember. And yet, I could get nothing out of Lady Babington. She's the most secret woman I know. I felt sure all the time that she knew about it. Do go on. How is she looking? What is she doing? You've heard the news?"

"What news?" asked Lady Middlemass.

"Her mother's dead."

"Really?"

"Yes, and I believe she has left money to Rebecca. The old man is in a dreadful state of mind, and says that it's Rebecca who killed her; whereas, every one knows it was himself. When men grow old! He would speak to no one, but kept calling for Frank Roland——"

Lady Middlemass started indignantly.

"What, dear?" exclaimed Mrs. Cayley, smiling.

"Is she buried? I was going to ask."

"Yes; but the old man didn't send a line to Rebecca, although he wired to Roland. Tell me about him. I suppose he's done the heroic at last, and ran in just at the right time."

"Oh," said Lady Middlemass, laughing outright. "You would say that it had all been an arranged plot. I left him and his old aunt with her. The husband's in prison, you know."

"In prison!"

"Yes, he forged something."

"Now, was not I right?" asked Mrs. Cayley again. "Do you remember I told you that day in the Morpeth drawing-room how it would happen? But tell me—tell me."

"I know nothing. I came away rather vexed, you know. Frank Roland has been kinder to me than any other man, but he took pity on her, I

suppose, he's so sentimental for a soldier, and remained to see what could be done. Of course his aunt is there, too, you know. *I* came away."

"Now this is too lovely. Roland is with Rebecca," exclaimed Mrs. Cayley, bringing her chair nearer. "I knew what it would be. We all said it, except blind old Lady Babington."

"What will it be?" asked Lady Middlemass, suspecting too well what it would be.

"Didn't I say, child," replied Mrs. Cayley, "that a runaway match is easier after marriage than before it, and when the husband's in prison the easiest thing in the world!"

"Frank Roland isn't the man for that," said Lady Middlemass.

"How was he looking when he heard all this?"

"Oh, like a philanthropist."

"Or like a phil—what's the name for woman in these dreadful Greek words? He'll take her home, of course."

"You don't think so?"

"You silly girl, of course he will! The thing's clear. Mark my words, Roland will marry Rebecca. My dear child, he doesn't love you at all. What's more, Rebecca will love *him*."

"But the husband will come out of prison some day," said Lady Middlemass, trying to look indifferent.

"Ah, who knows? These Italian prisons are dreadful, I'm told. Prisoners die in them.

And his penalty will be for life. Why, it's all just the silliest novel! Rebecca is going to have a strange life. What *will* happen, do you think?"

"You seem to know," said Lady Middlemass.

"And listen," continued Mrs. Cayley, "old Lady Babington, eternal chaperon, started the day after the funeral for Naples. She had some dying request from poor Mrs. Morpeth for Rebecca. She'll be with her now, I suppose. What a pity you didn't wait. It was foolish of you, dear. We'll get nothing at all out of Lady Babington."

"I came away because his aunt was such a tiresome old thing."

"Well, you know, Henrietta, they were all rather inclined to laugh at you for going at all, you know. Just a little tiny laugh. If I were you I would lock your sisters up. They say dreadful things about you."

"I don't care," said Lady Middlemass. "Where are they?"

"They're in town. Do tell me more."

"I've nothing to say, because I really saw so little. I wasn't a whole day there, you know."

"Oh, she'll be here soon."

"Impossible! The child is hardly a week old."

"The child!" exclaimed Mrs. Cayley, "you didn't tell me. Now do, like a sweet, sit still, and tell me it *all*. She's had a child! And all those

worries came on at once. Her father will surely be satisfied that her punishment has been heavy enough. You know I think Rebecca takes her romanticism from her poor mother. We'll see more of it yet. Roland! And the other man in prison! It's all like a silly novel. I didn't know that reality could be so like fiction. I wonder what sort of experience she has had. Not a word shall we be able to wring from that old secret Lady Babington. My dear child, you did a foolish thing in not staying."

"Well, I can't stay any longer at present," said Lady Middlemass, rising.

"I'm so sorry for you. But men are deplorable. They're not the stronger but the stranger sex, as I used to say to poor dear Cayley."

Lady Middlemass said good-bye, and drove off. Mrs. Cayley's suggestion that Roland would very likely bring Rebecca to London seemed preposterous, and as she drove up Sloane Street she was almost glad to see no signs of his return. But next day she got a start and a surprise. She had not driven past the gardens of Cadogan Square, when looking ahead, she saw the sun-blinds at his windows. Her heart beat faster, and her face flushed. It was almost at her lips to tell the coachman to stop at Roland's number. But she had hardly the courage. As she came nearer she thought every passer-by knew the meaning of her excited looks. When she was beneath the win-

dows she ventured to look up, but even if any one had been there, he or she would have been hidden by the sun-blinds. Lady Middlemass sank back in her carriage. But on looking at the pavement, she started when she saw a figure which seemed familiar. It was Tizio, almost paler than ever, and dressed as she had seen him at Maddaloni palace. He recognised her, and lifted his hat.

"Stop!" she cried to the coachman, and the carriage drew up. "Are they home?" she whispered as he came forward.

"Yes, they're in these rooms," said Tizio pointing upward. "Curse them, if you'll excuse the words, madam."

Lady Middlemass excused the words, but hardly found any others as suitable to express her own feelings. She felt the awkwardness of the situation, and yet wished to hear more from Tizio.

"Could I see you? Could you see me at any time?" she asked.

"Yes," said Tizio eagerly, with his eyes brightening.

"Walk to the end of the street, I shall meet you there."

Tizio walked quickly, and arrived almost as soon as the carriage. She watched his lithe, eager figure as she attempted to master the confusion within her. She began to think that she

would perhaps do a strange thing if she invited Tizio into her carriage, and she almost repented not having gone straight to Roland's rooms. She could have wept for reasons too many to count. She muttered to herself that she was the weakest of women, though every one thought her so strong and bitter and hard. But she was already at the corner of Sloane Street, and in a moment Tizio was standing among the crowd who were waiting for the 'busses. He opened the carriage door, and stepped in before the footman had time to dismount.

"Onslow Gardens," said Lady Middlemass.

Tizio sat opposite to her, but she thought it looked too conspicuous, and signed to him to sit next her. The glance she had got of him renewed her impression of his remarkable and searching face.

"It is strange, you know," she said, speaking low to him, "that I should have asked you to come to my house. But I—I am interested in the—in the Countess Maddaloni."

"I can tell you everything," said Tizio, "if that is what you want."

"Yes, yes, that is what I want," replied Lady Middlemass, feeling that at last she had found some one who could think and feel as rapidly as she did.

"Are you to be long in London?"

"Yes, I think, very long, madam. As long as

a woman remains obstinate, and that is pretty long, isn't it?"

"May I ask are you in business here? Did you come with *them*?"

"*They* came with me," replied Tizio, copying her emphasis; "I saved her. What could *he* have done?"

"Does every man love this woman?" exclaimed Lady Middlemass, and she turned and looked at Tizio, who seemed to her almost a boy. "*You* love her too," she said. "Why, is there going to be quite a duel between you? Are you very miserable? They have treated you badly, I suppose?"

"Yes, in a way," said Tizio more calmly, as he began to perceive what sort of a companion he had found.

They were at Onslow Gardens.

"Well, will you come in?" asked Lady Middlemass a little diffidently.

"With pleasure, madam," said Tizio, who was not five minutes in the house before he felt sure that he would often visit there.

There could be no delay, no *finesse* between two people so much in earnest as these two, and thus they gave confidences to each other, although at the close of their interview Tizio became a little more like his usual self as he thought of the many possibilities which might lie in so curious a meeting. The two days spent in

pacing up and down Sloane Street and in watching Roland's stairs had made him more savage and uncontrolled than he had ever been. But when he saw how Lady Middlemass watched him, and, as he thought, admired him, he said within himself, "Ha, ha, in fat pious old England they *do* intrigue just like ourselves!" He looked round the room, and when he became slightly weary of all the questions she was putting to him about Rebecca and "Maddaloni," and the marriage, and the debts, and the journey home, and a hundred other things, he asked if he might go on the verandah to see the flowers. "Even this stripling," thought Lady Middlemass, "turns his back on me to look at flowers and bad grass."

But that was Tizio's ruse.

"Lady," he said when he came back, "you love him very much?"

"Really, sir, it is hardly a fit question for a stranger like you to put to me."

"But then I have told you that I love *her* very much."

She could hardly help smiling, and told him that because he was so young much would be forgiven him.

"But she never loved you?" she asked, while the smile disappeared in a look of inquiry.

"Ah, well. She told me I was a passionate boy. And I kissed her."

"The good, pure woman! Did she ever talk about her father or her mother? Did she love her husband?"

"How could she? She loves those who are kind to her."

"Were you kind to her?"

"I saved her," said Tizio triumphantly, "and I showed that great dull Englishman the way home, too."

"You do not know what love is. It compels us to love those who neglect us."

"Oh," said Tizio, quickly, and reading her thought, "Roland neglects you? I must be going."

"You have told me nothing."

"I shall come back."

"Do," she said. "You have lost her."

"And you have lost him."

"What can be going to happen!" she exclaimed. "Come back, and let me know if her father is going to receive her."

"Roland paid for everything on the road home. That's a sure sign, is it not?"

Lady Middlemass laughed.

"I am going to try to get into her father's bank. I was born lucky, you know. I shall wait," he said, grinding his teeth. "Isn't she lovely? Is she the loveliest woman in London?"

"That's a question to ask a man, not a woman."

"Ah, she has suffered dreadfully, far more than you have ever done," said Tizio.

Lady Middlemass whispered to herself, "impossible," while Tizio went on saying, "We should all 'lay love for a little in ice,' you know."

He came next day but with no definite news about Rebecca. He had seen nothing of her, and had only walked twice up and down Sloane Street. While he was having a close talk with Lady Middlemass the unmarried Wallers were announced. They had suddenly heard of their sister's arrival, and came along in a great state for news. But they no sooner appeared than Lady Middlemass, rising, told them it was not convenient to see them, and that they must call in the afternoon. They just got a glimpse of Tizio, were slightly shocked, and murmured to each other as they withdrew, "Whoever can it be!"

"These are the Geologies," said Lady Middlemass, to him, "in other words, my sisters."

She told him to bring her news of Rebecca, and he said he would. He was as anxious as she was. She began to think he was extremely clever, but she bored him with too many questions about "Maddaloni." Yet he came oftener than he was asked, and already noticed signs of his influence over Lady Middlemass.

Meantime Rebecca was not so happy as Lady Middlemass supposed.

She desired to come out as soon as possible from the ambiguous position in which she found herself. Although she shrank from approaching her father, she saw that for her own sake and Roland's it would have to be done. Roland proposed that they should go together, but it was finally decided that he should first go alone to see what sort of reception Rebecca might expect. It began to appear that Roland's aunt was not altogether pleased with Rebecca, and she complained that she had been pitched about like a piece of baggage. To make matters much more ambiguous than they were, she left in a huff. Every one got to know it, of course, sooner or later, and the talk for a long time was that Roland and Rebecca for at least a week were thrown a great deal into each other's company. But where could she go? She was without money, and Lady Babington had not yet returned. As Rebecca said to Roland, the poignancy of all her life consisted in this, that she had always an audience eagerly watching her, and expecting her to do something wrong. It was the penalty of an elopement. A woman who had done that, they said, might do anything. She, too, was considered to be a pagan as well as her wretched and idolised husband. When it began to be known how her marriage had turned

out, and that she had now "run off" with Roland as she had "run off" with Maddaloni, all sorts of viperous tongues became busy. Her prolonged reserve and self-containedness added to the suspicions. Yet she implored Aunt Luckily to remain, but the old lady had become very excited, and had said vigourously that she had been brought up to other things, for which she thanked Providence and her parents. Roland who said good-bye to her at the door, received the coldest of hand-shakes, and knew that Miss Luckily's last will and testament would be reconstructed. It was then that Rebecca feeling that she was more or less a firebrand to kindle other people's passions, determined to seek reconciliation with her father.

"Frank," she said, "I have made a huge mistake, but I must not involve you in what all these people will be saying about me. My marriage has put everything wrong, and I hardly know what I am about. I went away an ignorant girl, but I have come back, and the world seems frightful to me. I did not think my life was going to be so poor. But I owe enough to you already, and must not stay."

She felt that until she was in her father's house again she could not even give Roland any confidences. And for the sake of little Reynold she determined to face the humiliation of begging to be taken back.

"Frank," she said, "I wish a perfectly quiet life hidden away from the world. Perhaps I ought to go back to my wretched husband."

Roland told her to cheer up, saying that it would all come right. He thought she had never looked so beautiful. She had known the violence of love, not its "still hours." But now the hours were "still," and he seemed to know her and love her more deeply than before.

"What can that Tizio be doing?" she said, "I never was so afraid of any one, and he is a mere boy. Why should he have followed us? Go, Frank, to Pont Street, and let me know what to expect."

Roland went, and when Briggs opened the door knew that something unusual had happened. "What, you, captain!" exclaimed Briggs. "You got the telegram?"

Roland answered he got no telegram, and asked what he meant. Briggs explained that Mrs. Morpeth was dead, and said the old gentleman had been crying out for him.

"Where's Lady Babington?" asked Briggs.

"How do I know?" said Roland.

"She's gone back to that mismarried miss of ours who's the cause of all this worry, as the guv'nor says. 'Ave you seen her, captain?"

When Briggs heard she was in London, he said it would surprise them all very much. But Roland lost no time in seeing the old banker, who

came in like the shadow of himself. When Roland came up to him he whispered, "You're too late, Frank. I'm now a lonely old man."

"I've brought Rebecca back to you," said Roland.

"What!" exclaimed the old man lifting his hand, and inexorable even in his grief; "never bring her here."

"You have now a grandson," said Roland. "She is the truest woman alive. You *must*. Mr. Morpeth, you need her. Take her back."

"Where is dear Lady Babington?" asked the banker.

"I don't know; but Rebecca is your daughter, and is waiting to come back."

"I—I cannot see her," said Mr. Morpeth, still in the rigour of unforgiveness. There was a silence between them for some time.

"Is she in poverty?" asked Mr. Morpeth.

"Yes," said Roland.

"I shall give her money, then."

"She needs more than money," said Ronald, while the old man was struggling between his conscience and his pride.

"No, Frank," he said sternly, while Roland left without any further attempt at conciliation.

CHAPTER III

MRS. CAYLEY was announced one morning at Onslow Gardens while Tizio was sitting with Lady Middlemass. Tizio rose, saying good-bye to Lady Middlemass, and left the room. Lady Middlemass seemed a little flurried, as if such an early call from Mrs. Cayley was an unexpected and unusual thing, and when Mrs. Cayley, who was a tall woman with aqualine features, shook hands, Lady Middlemass looked up rather shyly and with a blush.

"I have come early, dear," said Mrs. Cayley, noticing everything, "because I could not resist having another talk with you. Isn't it just as I said. Rebecca is back with Roland!"

"Yes, how did you hear?"

"Oh, your coachman told mine. But, Henrietta, who was that remarkable looking person in the room when I came in?"

"He's—an Italian," said Lady Middlemass, with a slight flush which rose as far as her dark eyes.

"Now, really. What are all you women coming to? Are *you* going to have an Italian journey too?"

"No; what do you mean?"

"Well—dear—you know ——"

"Please don't suppose that I'm like Rebecca Morpeth," said Lady Middlemass, smiling. "This man, it seems, came home with them, or rather brought them home. I had seen him in the palace—palace!—and met him by chance lingering in Sloane Street."

"He must know everything, then."

"Yes, and he has just told me that her father *won't* take her back."

"Then she and Roland?"

"Yes," said Lady Middlemass, submissively.

"Well, now, it is extraordinary," remarked Mrs. Cayley. "Is it really possible that only one of the 'eloping angels' has come back?"

"Of course, since the other's in prison! You know as much as I do. It's just his pity for her, you know, that makes Roland defy all decency."

"But I hear the aunt has left," said Mrs. Cayley. "Rebecca, you know, had always something curious in her. Two elopements within a year! I wish that old tiresome Lady Babington would come back who is always praising her up. I would like to hear what she has got to say now. Shall we call together, and offer congratulations or consolations or whatever it is to be. Her husband's in prison! Some women might envy her."

Lady Middlemass showed slight signs of being bored by Mrs. Cayley, and refused to call at

Sloane Street. She urged Mrs. Cayley to go alone, to which she agreed, saying that she would drive back with the news. As soon as she had gone, Tizio stepped into the morning-room again, and resumed his whispers. There was a perfume of lily of the valley in the room, and the sun blinds were drawn.

"Mrs. Cayley is coming again, you know," said Lady Middlemass, "and must not see you."

"We shall hear her horses, I suppose. Is she a great friend of yours?"

"No; not a great friend. She's now a faded woman, and her main pleasure consists in watching other women fade."

"She's not of much importance?" asked Tizio.

"How curious you are! Why do you make yourself so easily and quickly at home?"

"Because I would do anything to please a lady."

"Tell me more about *her*," said Lady Middlemass, picking up a strip of lily of the valley.

"Why do all you men love her?"

"Men like women to be tenacious."

"Where have you learned it? And is she it?" asked Lady Middlemass.

Tizio laughed, saying, "I can learn as much about it here in pious England as in pagan Naples. There is paganism here, too. *You* should have been out with us instead of her. I wonder what you would have done with 'Maddaloni.' I

bet you would have behaved less like a Christian."

He told her everything, and when she heard that Rebecca's husband was not even a Maddaloni she thought it all very humorous.

"How did she behave?"

"She was just like a child," he said; "quite timorous. If she had been as audacious as you would have been it would have been worse for her. But a woman so deceived will be eager to find any one to love her."

"And you go on loving her?" asked Lady Middlemass.

"Shouldn't it be like this?" he said, writing down on his notebook her own name and Roland's with a dagger between them, and his own and Rebecca's with another dagger. "But the lines are pointing the wrong ways at present."

"You are a strange creature. How old are you?"

"I suppose I am about three years younger than you."

"You must not live in Hatton Gardens. It's shabby. Come to Kensington."

"There's the carriage. I shall bolt," he said, rising, and going out before Mrs. Cayley came in.

"Just think," said Mrs. Cayley. "She was as stiff as a Puritan, and would hardly speak. I could get nothing out of her. Showed me the

baby. Fine boy. Admitted that her father won't have her. Obligated to the 'kindness of Captain Roland,' who, by the way, was not there. But you don't require to ask what she's come through. She's just a group of nerves."

"Is she as pretty as ever?" asked Lady Middlemass.

"I think she's even prettier—slightly thinner, though. I said, 'Rebecca, dear, how dreadful! and your poor mother!' She wept a little. Then I said, 'Rebecca, tell me, dear, was it just like brilliant nightmare?' She smiled, but said nothing. Roland was at parade. When I asked her what she was going to do, she said she was going to Lady Babington. Lady Babington will be home, it seems, in less than a week. But a reputation may be lost in one minute, not to speak of one week!"

"It was cowardly of her to run away. She always runs away," said Lady Middlemass.

"Of course, it's all very well for us to talk, and say that her place should be at the prison door, and that she should wait there till he comes out, if he ever does. Really no. I don't say as much as that. We women must stop somewhere. We are as kind to men as we used to be to our dolls."

"I beheaded all mine," broke in Lady Middlemass.

Mrs. Cayley smiled, and repeated that there

could be no question of love any more between Rebecca and her husband.

"How is she looking?" asked Lady Middlemass.

"Rebecca is so strange. She never looks guilty. I must say she is extremely womanly. After all, it is people with unquiet consciences who grow old quickest," said Mrs. Cayley. "We must admit that Rebecca did love desperately, and bravely."

"It was not brave to run away from him, and not very brave to run away *with* him," said Lady Middlemass.

"Would *you* have remained, dear?" demanded Mrs. Cayley. "Any woman involved in such a catastrophe of love is pathetic. What I can't forgive in Rebecca is her silence. A woman who can't be a gossip *is* a coward, if you like. Gossip requires nerve. As for Roland I wish I had seen him. I shouldn't be surprised if in the end they'll both be as innocent as the babes in the wood, although meantime, of course, there is a great deal of talk about it."

It was rather curious that Lady Middlemass began to stake the future on another woman's virtue. At any rate, Mrs. Cayley's conviction of Rebecca's innocence came as a relief. But to the end Rebecca remained a mystery to Lady Middlemass, and the two years or so which elapsed before the final issue of these entanglements saw

her judging and rejudging and misjudging a hundred times. Rebecca always appeared to her as a secret rival, rejoicing in her power of reserve and her unostentatious fascinations. She seemed to attain her ends by not making a bid for them. The poignant sting for Lady Middlemass was that she sincerely wished to be the very last to mention Rebecca's name along with Roland's in any dubious way. It was precisely the irony of her position that, although she feared Rebecca, she never said openly, or allowed it to be said, that Roland loved her. She was too anxious to persuade herself and others that Rebecca, being the good woman she was, could allow herself only to be pitied, not loved, by Roland. Occasionally, of course, a bitter word escaped her lips. But during all the time in which, as Mrs. Cayley said, Rebecca was giving herself up to the dust and ashes of repentance, hardly seeing any one except Lady Babington, it looked as if the "rivalry" had disappeared. The situation had apparently ceased to be even amusing, and attention was drawn off to Lady Middlemass and Tizio, who were beginning to cause some anxiety to the unmarried Wallers, for instance. As for Roland he could endure, without much difficulty, the chaff of such men as Rufus and Longridge, and of his other numerous friends.

It added additional piquancy to the relations between Rebecca and Tizio that he and not

Roland was really the means of her restoration at Pont Street. When he got to know that Roland had failed, he presented himself one morning before Mr. Morpeth. Briggs surveyed him in the same careful manner which Tizio had noticed before, but on saying that it was absolutely necessary to see Mr. Morpeth, since it was on business, he was allowed to enter. He had Vacca's letter in his hand, and as soon as the old banker appeared, frail in comparison with what he had been when Tizio first saw him, he lost no time in handing it. Mr. Morpeth looked at him closely.

"I have been here before, sir."

"Yes, I remember. Sit down, please."

He then read the letter and reread it in silence while Tizio looked round the room. He thought he perceived an irritated look change into one of more compassion on the stern man's face. His immense head was thrust forward from his shoulders as he read Vacca's long letter, holding it at a distance from his eyes.

"I see you are mentioned here," he said.

"Yes, sir. I was the means of getting her out of Naples. She might have been detained, and numerous complications might have ensued. But Vacca has made everything right, and it is now known that she was not implicated in the fraud."

"Hem!" muttered Mr. Morpeth; "what has become of the man?"

"Imprisonment for life, and the confiscation of all his goods, but, as you probably know, he had none. I have been an eye-witness of your daughter's heroism. Few women would have behaved with such spirit."

In spite of the humiliating narrative the harsh old man could scarcely repress a certain feeling of satisfaction that his daughter had behaved as Vacca had described. He had been informed of the collapse, but he did not know the circumstances. Perhaps he might never be able to forgive her, but at least it was something to hear that she had borne self-inflicted trials as befitted a child of his own. And the feeling of satisfaction gradually changed into one of reconciliation as Tizio ventured to plead for her. "Monstrous delusion!" muttered the old man as if no one were there to hear him; "she has had her punishment, and her conscience has doubtless gathered his tax from her."

He turned to Tizio.

"What are you doing here?"

"I brought your daughter, sir, as I said, and Vacca sent me with that letter. I am wishing to place myself in a bank here."

"Let me see you, young man," Mr. Morpeth said, and made him come to the light.

Tizio smiled as he asked him, "Where did you learn shrewdness?"

"Partly from you, sir," answered Tizio;

"you told me the last time I was here to frequent the company of old men who knew the world."

"Ah, yes, I remember," said Mr. Morpeth, and then began to question him on Vacca and the Neapolitan Bank.

Then he said, "I have a vacant post in my bank here. Will you take it?"

Tizio, who always believed in his luck, accepted the offer with little sign of surprise. But he went back to Lady Middlemass, very pleased with what he had done. He had not won Rebecca, but he had won a place in her father's bank! Besides, he had prepared the way for her return to her father, and that would increase his and her obligations to him. Lady Middlemass became very friendly, and told him he was a clever youth. "But will she go back?" she asked.

"Of course. She's not fit for wickedness. It's too roundabout and fatiguing."

She looked at his marvellous eyes where all his wits seemed to be gathered.

"If you love her," she said, "you're very cool about it. She's in another's keeping."

"Yes," he said, "I know when to fill my brain with a heap of cold thoughts."

"The position in the bank makes you happier than a woman could?"

"Well I would never blow out my brains for a woman. Would Roland?"

"Stay!" she said as he rose to go, "do stay, do!" pressing him.

"Oh, no; where's Roland?" he replied. "You're an opportunist, a polytheist in love. Miss Rebecca keeps at least only one god at a time. Good-bye!"

"Little usurer!" she thought, "pretty, bitter successful little usurer!"

CHAPTER IV

It was to be expected that old Morpeth, when finally driven by a variety of emotions to consent to Rebecca's return, would make his own terms regarding the precise manner of it. News was conveyed to Rebecca through Lady Babington, with whom she was now living, that she might come back to her father's house on condition that not a word be spoken about past events. There were to be no scenes, and she was never to mention her mother's name. There were to be no pleas for pity or forgiveness. And so Rebecca returned to Pont Street, and was sitting at breakfast one morning when her father came down. She was appalled at his appearance. When she went up to kiss him a half-stifled "No, no!" escaped his lips as his brows frowned, but he bent down with his eyes averted, and she kissed his brow. She knew not to be effusive, and said nothing about little Reynold until her father asked about him. The stiffness of this first meeting was more or less kept up during the long months in which Rebecca lived in seclusion with her child. After Briggs had seen her he went to Barkston and said "Missis Barkston, the parable of the Prodigal Son should have been the Prodigal

Daughter. Here's an 'ome coming from 'usks and a far country!" But both Barkston and Briggs were glad of her return, because it had been a house of mourning since she had left.

Rebecca, not too obtrusively, set about looking after her father. But in his presence she felt like a defeated and derided thing. The loneliness of two is far worse than the loneliness of one. She hardly ventured to open a conversation, and meals were often passed in silence. Had it not been for Lady Babington, who came often to see her, she would have passed an intolerably dull life. In order to forget his wife's loss Mr. Morpeth betook himself more and more into his business, and when he came home was as reserved as ever. Now and again, indeed, he looked at Rebecca, who had grown into womanhood since he last saw her. In spite of everything that had happened he could not resist feeling a certain pride in her. She gave herself no airs, and yet was not too humble. Her supreme womanliness did begin to soften and subdue his irritation. And although he spoke little he often felt annoyed if she left the room, and was glad to hear her returning step.

As little Reynold grew, and began to crawl on his grandfather's knee, and look into his eyes as if to plead for his mother, the old man could hardly help feeling softened. The child's half-timid, half-defiant eyes gave him amusement, and

sometimes he caused him to be brought to him after dinner. Little Reynold used to sit between his feet at the great fireplace in the library, and tie and untie the laces of his shoes. He always called him "pa—pa." For the first six months there were few callers at Pont Street. Rebecca was asked out, but went nowhere. Only Lady Babington and Roland were made welcome, while the others were left to their conjectures. But Rebecca used to be seen driving in the park with little Reynold and a nurse. Rumour came that her husband was dead, but people looked in vain for the widow's dress. It was known of course, that Roland often dined at Pont Street, and all kinds of gossip reached Lady Middlemass. "I hear they are exchanging presents," said Mrs. Cayley, "and what is more her father said to the Jerdans that it would be an act of providence if her husband could be 'removed.' Lady Babington knows everything that is going on, but *will* she speak. Rebecca might as well be in a nunnery." Now and again little Reynold might be met in his perambulator, and his chin and cheeks used to be squeezed and patted by a variety of unfamiliar hands. Even Lady Middlemass used to stop the nurse, and while admiring the child and calling him a little Italian, generally obtained some information about his mother.

It was about that time that Rebecca began to go to the little Church of the Redeemer again,

and that disquieting rumours were circulated, so that we have got back to the point from which we started concerning her struggle with her conscience. Some said she felt ashamed that she had abandoned her miserable husband, but was too fond of luxury to be able to give it up to go back to him. Others said she was wishing to marry Roland. That Rebecca had a struggle it would be absurd to deny. Really, Mrs. Cayley's way of putting the thing had some sense and truth in it. Is it possible for a woman to go on loving a man who has turned out a knave? It may happen every day that a woman's love for a man is gradually diminished and finally destroyed, not by a change in herself but in him. Who is going to ask her to go on loving him as she did, before she perceived his deterioration? In the ordinary affairs of life we would only make ourselves ridiculous by continuing to bestow praise on objects that have lost their value to us. If your gold turns out not to be gold, you are either a fool or a knave if you persevere in calling it by the same name. There is one sort of hypocrisy which unmask itself and disappears more quickly than any other, and that is the hypocrisy of love. It was easy enough for Rebecca's enemies to say that she was a selfish woman, and that she should have been standing at the prison door, instead of dining and dancing with Roland. But she had been born to be gay

as well as good. Hitherto she had only been good. She had been neither gay nor guilty. But it was known, of course, that she and Roland were often together.

Lady Middlemass was once driving through Richmond Park, and actually saw them sitting under a tree. And there were some accounts of an excessively awkward meeting, which took place at lunch the same day in the Star and Garter Hotel. But Lady Middlemass said very little about it. Certainly Rebecca was still in the middle of love's years, and no one knew it better than Lady Middlemass. Hitherto Rebecca had known only the caricature of love. And now she was hiding her love, and Roland was hiding his, but the hiding of it makes it more visible. The very speech and diction of it was at their lips. Their famous appearance at Mrs. Cayley's ball brought no satisfaction to their tormented friends. They still appeared like persons without guilty eyes, although they had suppliant souls. Two long years and more of suspicions and doubts, during which Rebecca seemed a sort of demi-widow, had to pass before the excitement of her friends wholly ceased. But we shall not linger over dull, dumb months which had nothing to chronicle. What exasperated the friends, who took a dramatic interest in the situation, was that although all the materials for a conflagration were here, they would not

ignite. And yet that became more possible every day. Had love really come to her a second time? Had he drawn her into the spell and wizardry of his kingdom, and was his door shut to? She told herself that she dare not love him, and after the ball threatened to go back to her husband. "I hear," said Mrs. Cayley, "that the boy now calls Roland 'papa'!" But observers like Mrs. Cayley were hardly able to see the real poignancy of the situation. There is one curious and delightful thing about human nature, which is that moral qualities may be actually seized and appropriated, and are a species of common property. In morals we may plagiarise, and no one will convict us of the theft. Thus Rebecca went to the little Church of the Redeemer and seized those rules of renunciation which she kept, as we love to keep a physician's prescription which has saved us from some long dreadful disease.

Tizio also went to the little Church of the Redeemer, but scarcely as a worshipper. True insight into the real tragedy of the two figures standing up with the stained window behind them to sing, "Lead, Kindly Light!" was denied likewise to him. It was impossible for a man like Tizio to know how puritanism has made the possibility of all moral catastrophe so impressive. Tizio could see only comedy in that singing, made slightly pretty by the presence of little Reynold, who seemed to wish to sing as eagerly as a cherub.

But when, as once happened, Lady Middlemass appeared in the pew to sing, she too, "Lead, Kindly Light!" and perhaps like Rebecca, with tears, Tizio, concealing himself as best he could, wondered if in every other humble little church such strange sins could be found grouped round the altars of God. And even Tizio might have been impressed by the sight of religion hurrying us to immortality, and love calling us to delay. At any rate, the spectacle of those three people standing up to sing religious poetry in the presence of one who knew all the secret terror of their hearts was unforgettable. And he thought that paganism goes lame and footsore in grey England, but that, perhaps, just because of its wounds, it breaks out now and again in fierceness.

When at last a rumour came that Hector was ill in prison, and desirous of seeing Rebecca, she felt that perhaps the charge of cowardice against her was true. It was only by an accident that she discovered that her husband had written to her. She saw a letter with an Italian stamp on the envelope, and she recognised Vacca's hand. Vacca, indeed, had kept up a correspondence with the old banker on the subject of his son-in-law ever since Rebecca's return. He kept assuring Mr. Morpeth that the prisoner's delicate constitution would not survive the austerities of an Italian prison. In fact, Hector, through various

causes which will be related in the next chapter, was very ill. Rebecca did not venture to question her father on the contents of Vacca's letter. It might be on business. She remained silent, therefore. But thinking it his duty to enlighten her, he mentioned that her husband was evidently ill. He did not wish to alarm her, because he was afraid that she might go at once to Naples and fall again into evil hands. She asked for details hesitatingly but imploringly. He only replied, however, that her husband appeared to be ill. Stung by pity and remorse she felt it was right to go to him. It would be her own deliverance from a long struggle of passion. She would overcome her love for Roland, and if Hector lived, she would live with him or at least near him, crushing out her real affection. Besides, she had promised to take little Reynold to him. She was afraid to ask her father for more news. She thought of Tizio. Perhaps he knew all about it. His peculiar good fortune in having secured a place in her father's bank had not displeased although it had astonished her. She hoped he had forgotten the folly of his conduct at Naples, and she felt glad that in some sense he was now in her power. He required to be on good behaviour, because at a word from her he might be dismissed. Yet she bore him no resentment.

The fact was that the spirit of the lover was asleep in Tizio, and the spirit of the usurer awake.

He was evidently content. If he wished amusement he could get enough from Lady Middlemass, over whom his influence and fascination were increasing. Roland's persistent indifference was wearing out her promiscuous heart. Like all Southerners, Tizio had the peculiar gift of whetting love, by wearing a cautious mask of indifference. Neapolitans are the most acute practical psychologists in the world. They will sit for hours watching your tendencies and discovering your habits. Sin has no hieroglyphics which they cannot read. A man may be in love with a woman, and yet if she does not respond he knows how to kindle her. If she begins to look at him he will look away. Tormented by the belief that he loves her no more, she begins to move toward him until at last he turns. But in the process both he and she may have gone through a hundred shocks of disappointment and distrust. Unlike a Northerner, Tizio was not the man to protest too much or to implore at all. As for Rebecca, he knew now that his passion for her was ludicrous. Apart from the fact that Roland blocked the way, Tizio felt of course that his place would not be safe if he even lifted an eye toward her. He resigned himself like a man used to all weathers. But he had tormented Lady Middlemass, and had her in his power as no man ever had. He became the avenger of poor Sir Tom. He was an open as well as a se-

cret visitor at Onslow Gardens. Even the unmarried Wallers got used to the sight of him lolling on a sofa or a chair. Now and again he professed an admiration for her.

"But you love Rebecca!" she said to him in reproach.

"And you love Roland!" he replied.

After Mrs. Cayley's ball it looked as if Lady Middlemass would likely accept the inevitable. Her terror was that Tizio might blackmail her into marrying him. He knew her better than any man in London. What she felt was that he whom she had wished to use as a spy on Rebecca had become a spy on herself. Yet as regards Rebecca, he brought her as many tales as she was pleased to hear.

It seems that Rebecca, troubled by the jibes of selfishness that had been flung at her, used to seek out Tizio to ask him if he knew how it was faring with her husband. Tizio, of course, put his own interpretation on her questions. She used to go to Hatton Gardens, where he still practised economy. She was afraid to ask her father, and felt sure that Tizio knew all that was happening in Naples. He was always able to give her information. And yet in spite of his subordinate position, and the fact that she could dismiss him if she pleased, she noticed that he had not lost that irony and bitterness which had always flavoured his speech. He had never

cringed. Although by an indiscretion he might lose his place, he did not hesitate to twit Rebecca on the situation. He said he was sorry that her husband still lingered, but that if she had patience, doubtless providence, in which she believed and had been brought up, would be kind.

"These have been long months," said Tizio, "but doubtless they have seemed longer to the wretch in prison. You ought to go and see him, you know, and hold the crucifix now and again before him as he lies on his rag bed. After all, dear lady, was it not you who by your wonderful passion actually compelled him to marry you. So he told us. Of course he wished you for your money, but when he saw you were disinherited, he did really edge away, did he not? He was a coward because he was afraid what you might think of him, and so married you. It was perhaps not pretty, but if you had taken the hint which he gave you, it would have been far more comfortable for you. He gave you an opportunity of getting just a glimpse of his motives. Ah, if you had been acute when you saw him cool after the explosion with your father! Yet, yet, you will arrive all right by a very roundabout way. I believe he *will* die before Roland gets bald."

Tizio explained those visits in his own way to Lady Middlemass, exciting her by putting wrong interpretations on them. Some months passed,

until one day he found himself in the little Church of the Redeemer again. Roland and Rebecca were there, and little Reynold, and Lady Middlemass, who now gave promise of being a regular church-goer. Tizio, however, had grown weary of such clumsy and roundabout paganism, and he waited contemptuously until the service was over. He came behind them as they passed out of the church, and then made up to them. Lady Middlemass blushed. He shook hands with none of them, of course, but took a letter from his pocket, and gave it to Rebecca. He said he had been to Pont Street with it, but that the butler had told him she was at church. So he had come, and taken part in the service along with them. Lady Middlemass, who seemed very excited, chatted with Roland, and held little Reynold by the hand. Rebecca and Tizio, who walked at a slight distance from her, came behind. She turned pale as she saw Hector's handwriting on the envelope.

"Yes," said Tizio, "it's from him. Vacca sent it, and I got it only very late last night."

There was a scrawl inside dated from the Carmine prison, and it contained a piteous appeal to her to come to him. Roland turned round, and started at her appearance.

"What is it?" he asked, while Lady Middlemass, with a glance at Tizio, joined in the question.

"It is from—from Hector," she said. "I—I must go to him."

"Dear Rebecca," said Lady Middlemass, "I've always said so!"

"Why?" asked Roland, while Tizio still waited, observing them all.

"He is ill."

"But you can't go, Rebecca, you mustn't go," said Roland.

Tizio, amused, and knowing that she *would* go, lifted his hat and left them for Onslow Gardens.

CHAPTER V

TIZIO had been gradually winning the approbation of Mr. Morpeth. Indeed, it took the old banker only a short time to find out that he possessed all the qualities of an astute usurer. He became interested in his subtlety. Although he distrusted foreigners, he had felt specially grateful to Tizio for his services in bringing Rebecca back, and was willing to give him a chance. On the other hand, Tizio already knew his man, and adapted himself to the new surroundings with ease. Vacca seemed a miserable little jobber in comparison, and although he had sent wailing letters, urging Tizio to return, and offering him a partnership, the shrewd young Neapolitan would not be drawn, being too snug where he was. He amused himself by finding points of resemblance between Mr. Morpeth and Vacca. Puritanism and paganism did seem to meet, though in a hesitating way, in the banker and his daughter. Rebecca's so far successful combat with the mammon of unrighteousness had its counterpart in the skill with which the banker manœuvred religious and worldly instincts, and Tizio was not sure whether on the Great Day in which all Puritans believe, the father's reckoning might not be stiffer than the daughter's! Rebecca

possessed at least all the charities. He calculated on her goodness, and felt sure that she would not betray him to her father. She had not even told Roland about him. He was surprised at the tolerance which she had, but which her father lacked. When the old banker used to mention Tizio's name with approval, saying that here, at least, was an Italian with a good head on his shoulders, she gave no sign that she happened to know better than he did all that the head and heart of Tizio contained. But Tizio was too cautious of profit and loss to do himself an injury by an indiscretion. If a sentiment became too expensive he generally dropped it altogether. If his assiduity and acuteness at banking were paid as they ought to be, he would remain satisfied. And there was always Lady Middlemass in the background as a guarantee for the amusements and follies of life.

His visits to the little Church of the Redeemer also pleased the old man, who put his own explanation on them. Tizio smiled and acquiesced, and went oftener. He felt that the day on which he handed the letter to Rebecca would be the most important of all, because it would doubtless bring about the change in her life which every one was expecting. Indeed, he was not sure whether he might not be handing the note that morning to one who was already a widow. At any rate he was not surprised when he was

summoned to Pont Street in the afternoon. Rebecca, in the excitement which came over her after she had read her husband's note, made up her mind to leave for Naples. Roland was filled with consternation, and her father opposed the project altogether. She said she would take little Reynold with her, that she had promised, that it was her duty. Roland feared it might rather be her disaster again.

"Father," she said, "how can you say I ought not to go?"

"Frank, will you go with her?"

"No, no," said Rebecca.

"The truth is," said Roland, "I couldn't, my superior is on leave just now, and I'm in his place. It's impossible!"

It was then that Mr. Morpeth proposed Tizio, but Rebecca refused to hear his name. Tizio! But her father sent for him, and he came in among them, pale as usual, and with a triumphant smile.

"You owe a great deal to him already," said her father in Tizio's hearing.

She and Roland looked at each other.

"I would prefer Frank, then," said Rebecca.

"But it's impossible!" repeated Roland.

When at length Mr. Morpeth put the question to Tizio whether he would accompany her to protect her, he said, with a glance at Roland, that he would consider it an honour.

"Of course, he's the very man," said Mr. Morpeth in an authoritative tone. "He knows all those scoundrels who might lay their hands on you."

"Father, it isn't necessary," urged Rebecca.

But since there was little use resisting him, his mind being made up, Rebecca consented provisionally, and Tizio left with instructions to be ready for to-morrow. Rebecca followed him, however, and at the door spoke a few hurried threats, in whispers.

"I do not wish to do you any injury," she said; "but you must not come out with me!"

"As you will," he said; "but your father has asked me."

"He does not know what you are. You must get up some excuse, do your hear?"

"How is it possible?" asked Tizio, evidently angry with her.

"*You* must find that out," she said.

"I shall lose my place then? What have you to fear? Do you suppose I shall wish to risk anything by insulting you? Even though I had nothing to risk I would not insult you. I understand you now. Come, be as generous as you've always been. I shall be at your beck and call. The 'Maddaloni' will die, and then you will marry Roland! Tell me, am I bitter or sweet?"

It was the first time he had ever spoken to her

in so humble a key. She looked at him fixedly, saying she could not comprehend him.

"Do you not know," he said, "that, Lady Middlemass has—compromised herself—has made me forget you."

"I do not know what to do," exclaimed Rebecca, astonished. "*You must not come, that's all!*"

"As you will," he said, passing out with the thought that after all Lady Middlemass and not the Morpeth Bank was to be his fortune.

But when Rebecca returned, her father insisted again that Tizio should go. She solved the problem by suggesting that Barkston should accompany her. Barkston would be a companion, and would attend to Reynold. Roland seemed relieved of anxiety, and her father approved the proposal. She sent a little note to Tizio saying that he could come, and he thought his luck would never end. In the interval it had suggested itself to Rebecca that after all he might be indispensable. If she took the necessary precautions he might be of infinite help. She remembered Vacca and the intrigue which might be rewoven round her. Yet if she caused Tizio to lose his place by revealing why she did not wish him to accompany her, it might in the end be much worse for herself. He would find his way back to Naples, and would be there before her. As things stood, however, she had a certain

power over him. His position in her father's bank would make him careful, and the tables would be turned on him.

Otherwise, too, she was glad that Hector had sent his appeal to her. Her unquiet Northern conscience condemned the sins of imagination as well as those of reality. Instead of fighting against her love for Roland she felt that it was perhaps true that her place ought to be at the prison door. And yet the crisis of parting under such circumstances only made more visible the love of those two for each other. Lady Middlemass observed it when she came to the station on pretence of seeing Rebecca off. She had been astonished when Tizio told her that he was going too. "Do not go!" she said. "You will never come back. I do not understand that woman. She might do anything. Is Roland going?" "No," replied Tizio smiling; "he's left for you this time!" "Are you happy to go with her?" asked Lady Middlemass. "Why not?" said he. Tizio was surprised to see her at the station because she had not told him she intended to come. She had lovingly said good-bye to him in her own house. He watched her giving her hand to Roland.

"Rebecca, dear," she said, as soon as Rebecca arrived, "how dreadful! My dear, I assure you widowhood is ten times worse than marriage."

Tizio watched them all with amusement, and

felt very pleased. He conversed stiffly with Roland, and ordered Barkston about until she asked him indignantly whom he took her for. "For a maid," said Tizio, and burst out laughing in Briggs' face. "Mr. Briggs," says she, taking him aside, "I may never see you again; Miss Rebecca's been a worry to us all. Who knows what may 'appen! I'm bein' expelled my country for 'er!" "Missis Barkston," says he, "I don't know what I'll do without you." "Nor I," says she. "Don't be seasick, Missis Barkston." "Gracious, and there's that too!" said Barkston. But these exclamations were cut short, because the signal was about to be given. Roland and Lady Middlemass were left standing on the platform while little Reynold waved his hand. Rebecca had been mute all the time. Tizio put his head out of his carriage window, and saw Lady Middlemass and Roland walking back, and evidently chatting freely.

Very pleased with himself and not anxious about Lady Middlemass, he speculated on the future, as was his habit. He thought it would be curious to see the "Maddaloni" lying at last on a rag bed in prison. He wondered what kind of a reception Vacca would give him, and how Naples would look after so long an absence. He did not travel in the same carriage with Rebecca and Barkston, but saw them at all the stoppages. Little Reynold, who was very fond of Tizio, al-

ways taking his hand whenever he got the chance, insisted on travelling in the same compartment; and cried very bitterly because Rebecca did not permit it. Much to Rebecca's amusement he had apparently more affection for Tizio than for any other stranger, and she thought it was a case of one Italian finding out another. In vain Barkston called him a naughty boy and bribed him with sweetmeats. He grumbled all the way, and used to make them hold him out of the window that he might wave to Tizio. At the frontiers Tizio saw their luggage through the customhouses. He was too discreet to ask Rebecca if she meant to put up at the Maddaloni palace. Indeed, she seldom let her eyes fall on him, which irritated him greatly. Barkston, too, used him as if he were a servant. But when he was in his own carriage he sat smiling and thinking of everything. He thought it strange that the only real love affairs he had ever known had been with two English women both older than himself. As regards Rebecca and the "Maddaloni," perhaps the illness was feigned, and was a ruse to draw Rebecca back. Perhaps even he had been got out of prison, and her virtue would find more readily than she expected the object it sought. Vacca had said very little that was definite, and Tizio knew all sorts of surprises were possible. What if the dear lady would have to throw herself on his

protection the second time? Surely this time it would be into his arms. Oh, he might have her at last dowerless or dowered!

Meantime Rebecca was engaged with her own troubles, and before the journey was at an end her thoughts had run on lines almost the same as Tizio's. She too thought as the distance increased between her and her home that it might all be a ruse, but on the part of Tizio! For all she knew the note might have been forged or written by compulsion, and Tizio, his quest in London finished, might be returning to his native city with herself as prey. She became extremely agitated, although she could not disclose herself to Barkston. She almost hesitated to go on, and before Naples was in sight she felt that, if she had not yet come face to face with the camorra, perhaps here it was at last.

And, at any rate, the camorra in its worst form had been very busy those two years with Hector. It flourishes better in the prisons than on the piazzas. Hector had been convicted of state treason, and had been sentenced to compulsory labour for life in one of the penal settlements. But he had been provisionally taken to the Carmine prison, and his transportation had been delayed. The Carmine is the oldest and foulest of the prisons of Naples. Originally a castle, it was built in the fifteenth century, and is below the sea-level. It is a great amorphous

mass of stone and brick which spreads itself ironically in front of the pleasure gardens of the poor people, and faces the sea. The visitor must pass through numberless doors before he finds himself in the prison proper. It is still the custom to herd the prisoners together in rooms, containing twenty or thirty persons. As a result, crime fertilises within the prison walls more rapidly than outside. It is rare that a prisoner is put into a cell by himself. The novice in crime is thrown among those who had grown old in it, and certainly Hector became acquainted with strange bedfellows. The beds are arranged in a row on each side, and once they have risen from them the prisoners spend the day quarrelling and gambling with each other. If they have no playing cards they win money or food from each other at games for which cards are unnecessary. It is in those rooms that the camorra still reigns supreme, and curiously enough, it makes its best gains out of its poorest victims.

When Hector arrived a motley crowd came clamouring to the door to see him, and once the door was shut and locked and the keeper had gone away, he was accosted by an individual who came forward with one hand raised to ask a contribution for the Lamp of the Madonna. When Hector said he had none, a torrent of abuse broke over him. Nino, who had been arrested with him, and was put into the same

room, now conceived a deadly hatred for him, and since Nino was of the camorra, Hector looked forward to all sorts of persecution. The organisation of the sect within the prison corresponds to its organisation outside. There is a chief or *caposocieta* as he is called, who is generally the strongest and most deadly person in the room; a secretary or *contaguolo*, who makes notes on the prisoners which will become useful when they all find themselves out of doors again, and numerous *guaglioni* or *piciotti*, these being generally younger men and sometimes mere boys who carry on the work of extortion and torture for their superiors.

These *piciotti* must give evidence of skill and astuteness before they are admitted to take part in the work of the sect. They must be clever with the knife, and are required to swear an oath that they are ready to suffer woe upon woe (*guai sopra guai*!). The old camorristi describe themselves as beings with one foot in the grave since they are always in a state of war with society, and so run the risk of their destruction. If one of them has been sent to prison, he is sure to find on his arrival numerous representatives of the sect, who band together in the crowded room to tyrannise over the weak. The unfortunate individual who, by his ignorance of the passwords, betrays that he is not a recognised member, finds life in prison doubly severe and terrible.

And the door was no sooner shut on Hector than Nino, swearing by all the saints he had ever sent out of his shop, held him up to obloquy and scorn, and called for his punishment. As a rule, the new arrival, if he is not of the camorra and if he shows himself recalcitrant, is compelled by blows to do the most degrading offices for all the others. The prisoners are not handcuffed, and prowl through the dark rooms ready to pick quarrels on the slightest provocation. The prisoner is demanded for information regarding his family, himself, his property, his vices, so that if he ever issues from the place at all he may have to pass the rest of his life under blackmail. And so long as he remains in prison he may neither eat, drink nor sleep without permission of the camorra. If he complains, he will only receive the double of his penalties.

There have been cases where weapons have been found hidden under planks, and which had been used by successive camorristi as a means of keeping order in the room and intimidating the weak. And even to-day pieces of glass for the purpose of inflicting "sfregio," and other small weapons may be smuggled in by being concealed in the bread which the prisoners' friends are allowed to send them. So far as the bread is concerned, the best pieces generally pass into the camorra's hands. If it so happens that a prisoner succeeds, in consequence of his complaints, in

being transferred into a new room, he will only fall again into a worse persecution, because by an elaborate telegraphic system of knocks, communications pass from the camorra in one room to the camorra in another, so that there is no escape. It often happens that certain camorristi may be in receipt of wine from their friends, which is allowed them twice or thrice a week. They sell the wine above its price to those who are in the same room with them. Then they compel them to gamble at *tocco*, which is a game played with the fingers only. The victims are sure to lose, and if their money is spent, must surrender the wine, which then returns to the camorra, which has made a double profit.

This was the sort of expiation which Hector was undergoing. Every one was against him, and he was hustled from the one side of the room to the other. He was thankful when his trial came on, because it meant a brief deliverance. But he was always brought back at night with the terrible Nino, and he was once brought back with a sentence of exile and penal servitude. Because of his ill health, however, his transportation was delayed. He was being pecked to death like a bird put into a cage among others not of its own kind. He was compelled to take part in the free fights which took place in the room as soon as the keepers were thought to be out of hearing. He was physically a weak man, and

Nino had given him such a blow that he was carried one day wounded to the little hospital. His moral and physical collapse was completed by a slow fever which overtook him, and under which he was gradually sinking. But it was certainly he who had written Rebecca a last appeal.

Vacca was meeting her with his "Ha, bride, you will not have long to wait." Tizio had told him that she was in love with another man, and Vacca expected that his frank cynicism would suit her mood. He saw that again she was exquisitely dressed, and he recalled to her the tragedy of two years ago.

"Dear countess, you should write your memoirs, and remember the part old Vacca played. How he saved you, countess!" He took Reynold's hand, saying, "And this was the little swaddled runaway too!"

She was in no mood for him, but he talked on as was his wont, with his eyes twinkling as he asked for the banker, and offered consolation on the death of "that dear lady, your mother." He rated Tizio on his affection for the English, and asked him if he was not going to stay in Naples.

"He has seen what, dear lady, you did not see, that with the Italians everything is *façade*. Look at our churches, they are all show and vanity in the front, but monstrosities behind. You English build round and round, eh?" He saw that Rebecca was looking timorous, and encouraged her.

"Fear nothing. Old Vacca will protect you. You have been wise, bride. Keep mending your fortunes. Repair, that's the word, keep on repairing and mending the slits and cracks of this life. And when a thing is absolutely rotten, throw it over the window the way a Neapolitan does. In the good old days we threw all refuse over the window. Ah, bride, when you first came here I saw your face withering up like a rose!"

She asked for Hector.

"Deh! deh!" he said, using the exclamation which Dante and Boccaccio so often used, "he's had remorse enough, but the world laughs or is indifferent at remorse, and goes on its way. Nature is indifferent to our penitence and our penance! What a love you had, motherling. It was like the lava on our old diabolic pagan hill there which consumes and consumes and never consumes itself away!"

She resented his gaiety, but he would have talked for ever if she had not cut him short.

"Where is holy ground?" he said. "Ah, here, here where you loved and were deceived! I saw it all, old Vacca the usurer saw all the tragic magnificence of it, bride, like the blush-lightnings on our sea! He's on a rag bed! Old Vacca put poetry long ago to sleep!"

She went alone with little Reynold to the prison, and drove down Toledo Street. She hoped no one would recognise her. She looked

up at Maddaloni palace and at the balcony—her balcony.

“Reynold,” she said, “it was there you were born!” and the child looked wonderingly up. She thought of how different it all might have been, and a slight shudder went through her.

Vacca had made the arrangements for her visit to the prison, but she entered a little afraid. She had been told by Vacca that she might even be too late, and indeed it was a still bed at which she stood. She hardly recognised him in his uneasy sleep.

“Who is it? Who is it?” asked little Reynold, afraid.

“It is—it is your father!” answered Rebecca, while her tears fell on the rag coverlet.

“No, no!” said little Reynold, indignantly, and loudly refusing to go nearer, while the keepers stared curiously.

The sleeper turned, and looked wearily up as if the eyelids could hardly move.

“Hector!”

He looked at her, and remained dumb, not recognising her, but made the sign of the Cross. Rebecca bent over him and kissed him, but would not allow Reynold in case of infection.

“Hector!” She had come too late. He still remained insensible in the insensibility which puts all wisdom and all folly, all virtue and all vice at last to sleep. Surely passion and mad-

ness and hate and all signs of our mortality must fall in the end like dust through our hands!

She came out to the city again which was lying sun-deep, and saw the sea like a sea of glass mingled with fire. It was the day of Corpus Domini. The procession carrying the embannered crucifix was passing through the city with solemn music. It is strange that so many years had to pass before we could begin to put flags about His Cross! The procession moved slowly from the Cathedral up the street of the image-makers to Santa Chiara, entering one door of the old shining church, and passing out at the other, filling the town with symbol and mystery. Cross upon cross, as if to reiterate in a sort of tautology of symbolism all the meaning of man's existence, cross upon cross and the image of the Omnipotent were carried through the smoke of the incense and the soft fire of the sunbeams that filled Santa Chiara out into the blazing streets again. The vast circular procession moved through the amazing city, hushing and sweetening its noise with those lutes of redemption which were heard even far outside its gates where poppies were ruining in the sun. And Rebecca who, like a woman, had taken advantage of his illness to come to him, and at least let him die in her arms, seemed, by the help of all that symbolism and her own tears, to see hovering above his bed white hands of the Redeemer.

CHAPTER VI

"AND so, after the usual decent interval," said Mrs. Cayley to Lady Middlemass, when they had heard the news of Rebecca's widowhood at last, "I suppose the marriage will take place. It's the most roundabout sort of thing I've ever known. I heard that Rebecca is home, and that your little Italian friend did *not* accompany her. Barkston must have such stories to tell! It seems that Roland is at last smiling. I suppose Rebecca has now done with all dangerous experiments."

"She'll at last get a trousseau," said Lady Middlemass. "If I remember, she went away without one the first time. It's long before she comes to the last dress of her trousseau that a woman knows if her marriage is going to be happy."

"My dear, I would like to see you going up to her to offer your ferocious congratulations! Old Lady Babington, of course, seems to have triumphed. She always championed Rebecca, while we all thought she would go wrong. Many men have been in love with her, and at last she has chosen a man who is so undemonstrative that even if he had vices I believe they would be dumb. She was riding with him the

other day in the park. Is your little Italian coming back?"

"Yes," said Lady Middlemass, "I believe he is. Old Morpeth has offered him a better position in the bank."

"Never think of him!" said Mrs. Cayley. "He's far too young, although I never saw such eyes. He's beneath you. Do, my dear child, give confidences to me. I shall be *your* old Lady Babington. Come now."

But Lady Middlemass refused, and said that Mrs. Cayley would require to wait. But she had not to wait long, because Tizio, drawn again to the larger life of London, came back and resumed his duties at the Morpeth Bank, in which he was destined to rise high. Thanks to Rebecca, his income was already doubled. But he was not destined to share it with Lady Middlemass. He was sitting very comfortably one night near the verandah in Onslow Gardens, and Lady Middlemass and he were talking very sweetly about the wedded life. Tizio thought he might do worse.

"You prefer me to Naples, *do* you, now?" she said, looking into his eyes, whose mere strength of light was extraordinary.

"Yes," he said.

"I shall have to reform you. You are a dreadful young pagan, you know."

"We are very like each other," he replied.

"In the end love is as searching as a night wind, and finds everything out, doesn't it?"

"As searching as a little usurer!"

"But if you give me only usury of love I shall not have you," he replied.

"Ah, then, we have found each other," she said, as he came nearer.

But she had no sooner said it than she gave a sudden shriek. Tizio rose to see what was the matter. She pointed to the garden, and he saw a man slightly older than himself with a weather-beaten face come smiling toward the window, like a voyager returning home. It was none other than Sir Tom, saved from the whales and the sea. Lady Middlemass had just time to say "Jonah!" and fainted, while Tizio when he understood the situation hurriedly left. And Sir Tom was called "Jonah" for the rest of his life.

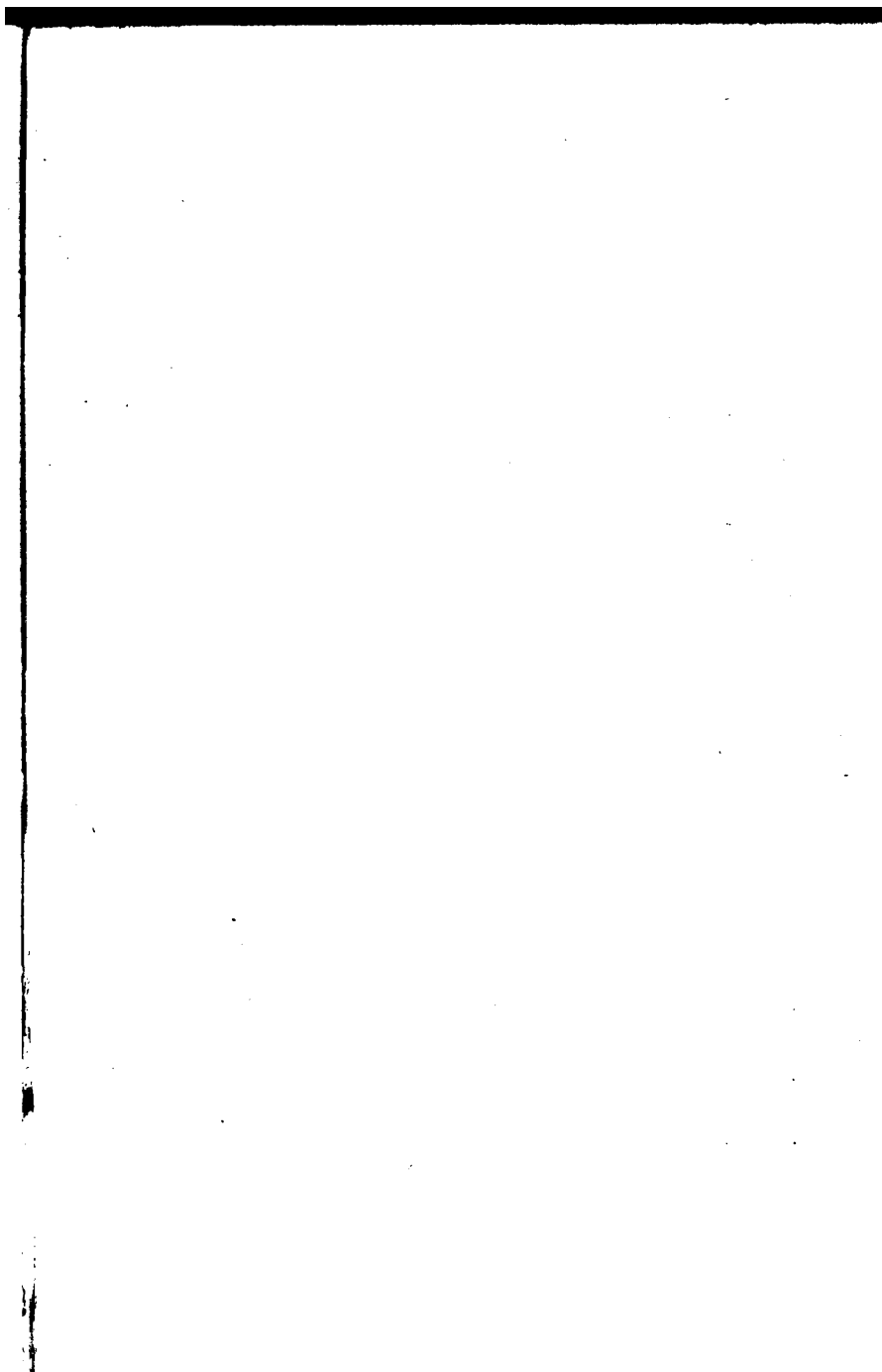
Roland and Rebecca were married in spring, and no fitter place was found than the little Church of the Redeemer. Old Morpeth at last possessed a son-in-law, and little Reynold a papa. Tizio and Lady Middlemass with "Jonah" and the unmarried Wallers attended the ceremony good humouredly, and of course Lady Babington was there. Even Mrs. Cayley admitted that Rebecca was justified in wearing orange-blossoms, since it was the first time she had worn it. But another bride was destined to wear it as well,

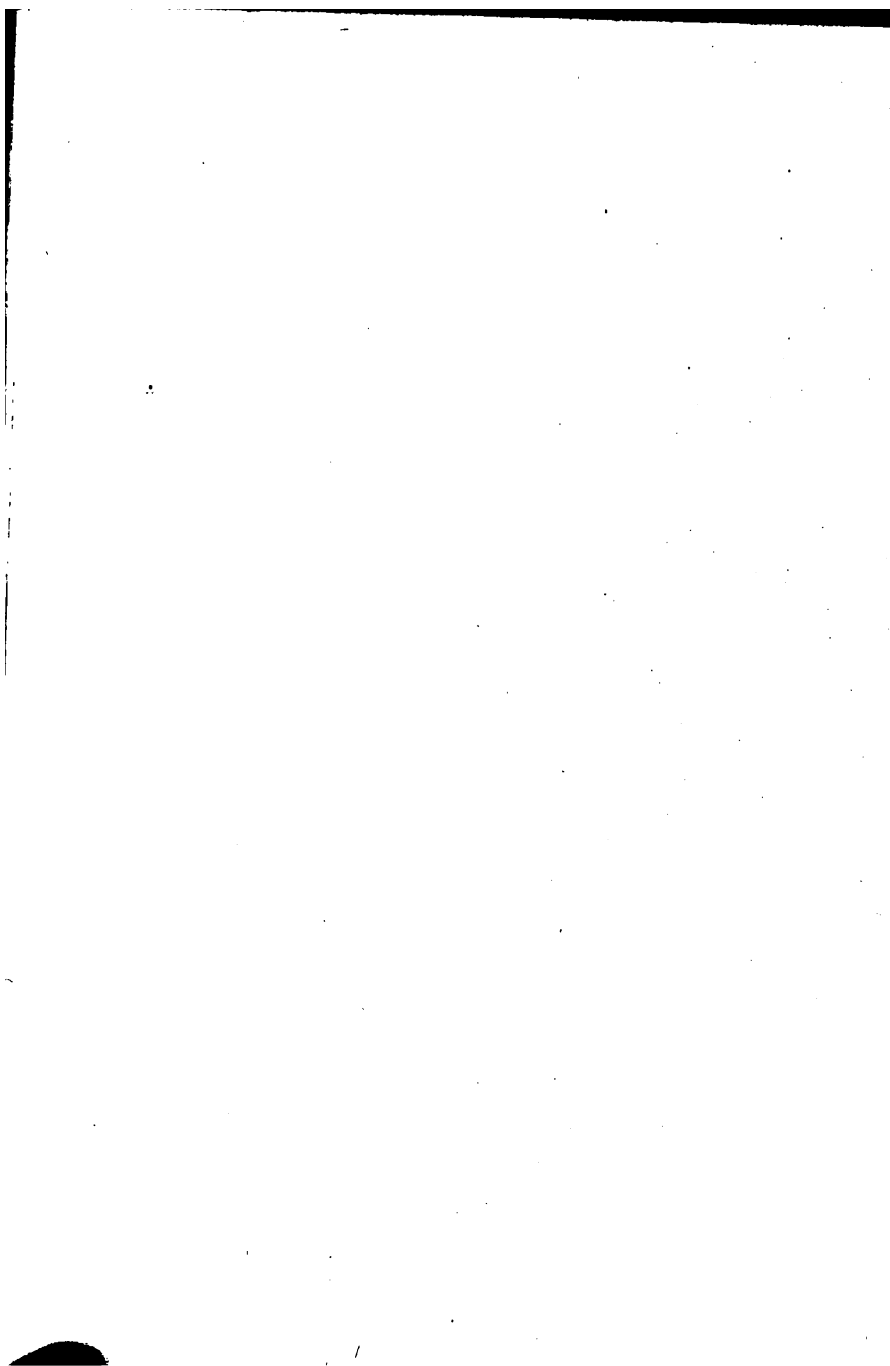
for Mr. Briggs in a parsimonious mood, suggested that Barkston should crave a piece of it, which she did, and wore it a week later with extreme satisfaction to Mr. Briggs and herself.

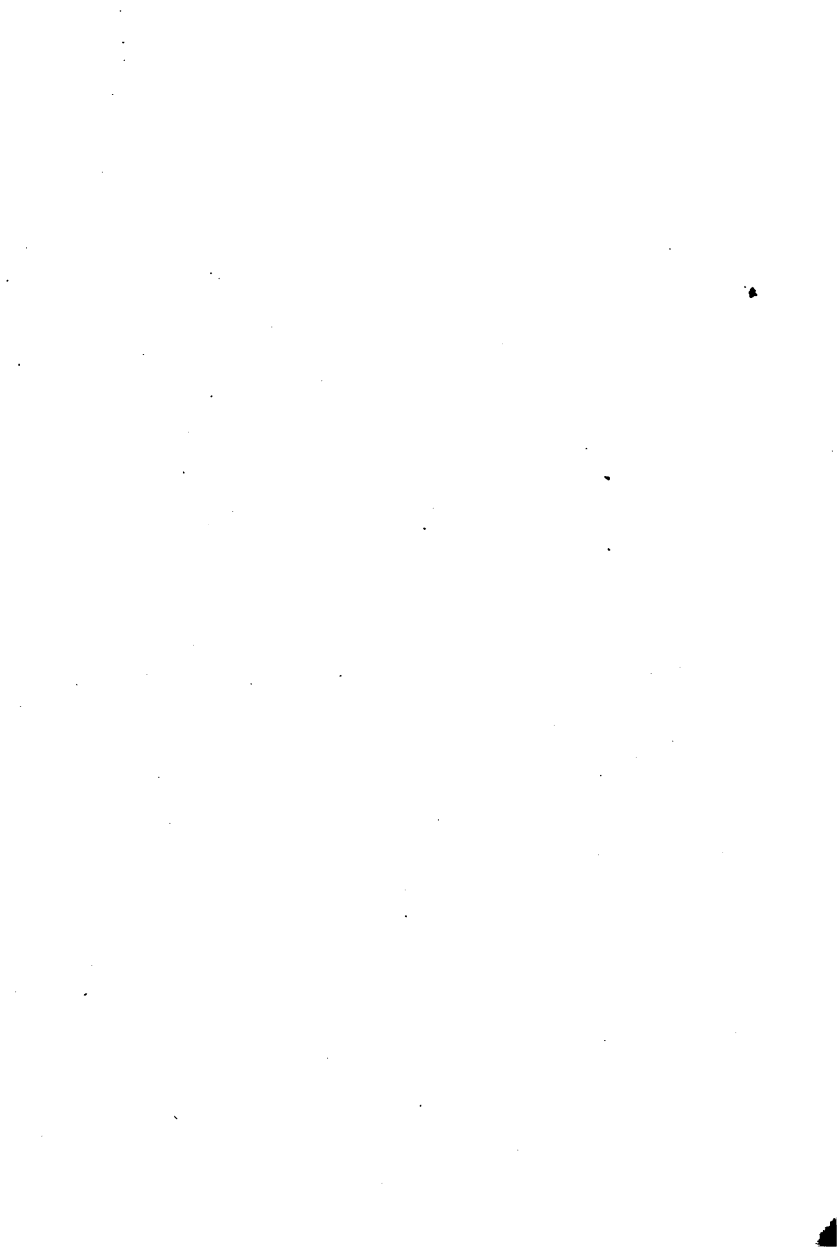
THE END.

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NOTE.—*The author has to thank the Prefect of Naples
for permission to visit the Carmine Prison.*







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